

**INDIVIDUALITY OR INDIVIDUALISM ?**

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree.

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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The thesis suggests that there are two discourses of the individual within the culture of modernity and in social philosophy and political theory : *individualism* and *individuality*. These are entirely *different*, but throughout modernity individuality has been submerged by or conflated with the dominant discourse of individualism. An aim of the thesis is to attempt to clarify the submerged discourse of *individuality* by identifying, and constructing or reconstruct- ing, some of its key features. In doing this it uses liberal-individualism as a contrast concept, and thereby implicitly identifies corresponding differences, limits, or omissions in the latter.

The core features of individuality (and, in brackets, of individualism) identified and discussed in successive Chapters are :

Comprehensive Inviolability	(Limited Inviolability).
Self-Determination	(Agency).
The Possibility of Autonomy.	
Self-Realization and Authenticity	(Personal Autonomy).
Internal Goods and <i>Being</i>	(External Goods and <i>Having</i> ).
The Ethical and Moral Self	(Moral Minimalism).
Communalism	(Gesellschaft).

In the case of each feature, an attempt is made to clarify ways in which it diverges from liberal-individualism.

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## CHAPTER 1      **INDIVIDUALISM AND INDIVIDUALITY.**

‘When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other’. (Hoffer 2005 p 21).

‘Whatever you may be sure of, be sure of this: that you are dreadfully like other people’. (Lowell 2005 p 21).

The thesis suggests that there are two discourses of the individual in social philosophy and political theory, and within the culture of modernity : *individualism* and *individuality*. These are entirely *different*, but throughout modernity individuality has been conflated with the dominant discourse of individualism. Presumably because of this there is a dearth of literature and analysis of individuality, so an aim of the thesis is an attempt at clarification - to identify, and perhaps at times to construct or reconstruct, the submerged discourse of *individuality* by focussing on what seem to be some of its key features. In doing this it uses liberal-individualism as a contrast concept and thereby implicitly identifies corresponding flaws, limits, or omissions in the latter. The core features of individuality identified and discussed in successive Chapters are : inviolability ; self-determination; self-realization and authenticity; internal goods and value; the moral self ; and communalism. In the case of each feature, an attempt is made to clarify the way in which it diverges from liberal-individualism.

The aim of this Introductory Chapter is –

- To look briefly at the relationship between the discourses of individualism and individuality.
- To review some core features of individualism, and how these might differ from individuality.
- To review the tradition of individuality and begin to identify some of its characteristic features.
- To explain why the conflation of individualism and individuality matters, what it prevents us from seeing, and what debates it relates to.

In the course of modernity Western cultures came to be dominated by not only an ideology of the *individual*, rather than the '*collective*', but by a specific version of this - *individualism*. This discursive dominance of individualism has led to its being regarded as subsuming any alternative versions, and as being *the* discourse of the individual, leading to a mistaken conflation of two quite separate discourses – *individualism* and *individuality*.

One effect of this has been to similarly narrow and conflate conceptions of the '*collective*'. The specific nature of individualism generated an individual/State or individual/society dichotomy from which eventually emerged '*collectivism*' as the *collective mirror image*, but supposed alternative, to individualism, again leading to a conflation of two separate discourses – *collectivism* and '*communalism*'.

The suggestion here is that individualism and collectivism on the one hand, and individuality and communalism on the other, are each a pair, not opposites, they go together. In each case, either individualism or individuality is the dominant partner : collectivism is imbued with the ethos of individualism, as communalism is imbued with the ethos of individuality. For example, the imperfections of individualism are responded to by State action, but the latter does not fundamentally change the ethos of individualism.

The focus is the discourse of individuality, simply because we live in a society dominated by individualism. The dominance of the latter camouflages individuality, changes its meaning, taints it with the ethos of individualism, and thereby makes it difficult for us to see what it would be. It is important to know therefore what individuality *is*, how it would be different from individualism. It is important to know that individualism is not the only individualistic option, and that collectivism is not the only alternative to individualism. The weaknesses or failings of a dominant individualism can lead to the assumption that some form of '*collectivism*' is the only option – usually, varying forms of State intervention and control, or some '*communitarian*' emphasis. We need to know that individualism can be different, and that it is not the only individualistic option.



The discourse of individuality exists as a loose 'tradition' embodied in the work of a disparate collection of social and political theorists and commentators, or the activities of groups and individuals. As a tradition in social philosophy and political theory it dates from classical Greece, but is preceded by philosophical Taoism, is found within the Gnostic tradition, was clearly evident in European Romanticism, is represented within Marxism, Socialism, and Anarchism, and is most recently found in Existentialism and Humanistic Psychology and their offshoots. This is not to say that these are founded on a concept of individuality but that it, rather than individualism, is one of their characteristics (see for example Marshall 1993).

Individuality has remained submerged and disparate precisely because of the dominance of individualism and its supporting socio-economic conditions, so that individuality as a discourse has been interpreted as being merely a sub-variant of individualism itself. Neither of these discourses are hermetically sealed universes without theoretical overlaps. Despite a situation of discursive dominance they exist in parallel and each borrows from and can at times imperceptibly slide into the other. This has been evident throughout the history of liberal-individualism, and particularly so in the emergence of early 20<sup>th</sup> century 'reform liberalism', and then again with the development of philosophical liberalism or liberal-egalitarianism from the 1970s. In fact it has been suggested (Abercrombie, et al, 1986) that as capitalism changed, in the mid- and later 20<sup>th</sup> century, liberal-individualism began to lose its discursive dominance and simultaneously changed its character, borrowing from and sliding into individuality, so that the boundaries between the two discourses became increasingly blurred. This view is arguable, but certainly there have been interesting changes in the terminology and concepts used by liberal social and political theorists since the 1970s and '80s : 'individualism' as a concept now rarely surfaces, being almost entirely replaced by varying conceptions of '*autonomy*' that has roots in both discourses ; 'capitalism' is rarely mentioned (except to proclaim its Cold War victory over 'Communism'), and is no longer regarded as being a 'constitutive' feature of liberalism, even though it seems in practice to be an integral feature of the liberal conception of the Right; and liberalism's starting point is redefined by some theorists as being 'equality' rather than liberty.

The concern of this thesis is to identify and clarify key features of the neglected discourse of individuality. A necessary brief starting point is with what individuality is *not*.

### **What Individuality Is and Is Not.**

That humans do not exist in general, but are individual personalities characterised by individual differences, is uncontested. But whilst such individual differences are central to individuality, and a basis of the claim that we are all individuals, their existence does not in itself confirm the presence of individuality. Individuality entails that individuals are enabled to *self develop*, that there is scope or opportunity for self-determination and self-realization. Individuality is a deliberative shaping of a life of 'ones own' and is thereby a developmental process and struggle, an achievement not a given. Self-development is enabled or constrained by the contexts within which it occurs, and this entails that we are alert to, and respect, the conditions of its achievement. It involves some sense of what MacPherson calls '*developmental power*' - the individuals ability to use and develop his capacities.

There is a view that because individuality is what identifies us as being different from others, then being *different from others* is precisely its concern. Abercrombie summarises this mistaken view well –

“The central point in doctrines of individuality is the need for the expression of each person’s uniqueness....further, the development of one’s own talents, ones unique qualities, is not necessarily rational or moral. On the contrary, cultivation of uniqueness might well lead to eccentricity or even socially destructive behaviour; the best way to stand out from the crowd might well be to be decidedly irrational”. (Abercrombie, et al 1986, p78).

But, as Larmore comments in relation to 'authenticity' –

“Being truly ourselves is not a matter of being different from others but of ceasing to guide ourselves by others”. (Larmore 1996, p 91).

Being different from others *for the sake of being different* is irrelevant to individuality. The more likely intention in this particular respect is 'self-possession' and 'self-determination', to take possession of ourselves and to act through



ourselves, to become 'the captain of our souls' : when we do not just repeat the opinions of others but form our own, when we refuse to put ourselves at the disposal of others in a servile way, but lead our own lives, when we do not live at the beck and call of each latest desire and craving that wells up in us but stand above them and exercise some control over them – thus we exercise our self-possession.

A second common view is that individuality seems often to be regarded as something selfish and self-regarding, and therefore at odds with altruism or normal concern for others. For its critics it also conjures up images of self-fashioning individuals, subjects of free and conscious self-creation, who invent their characters, projects, and values *ex nihilo* : a world of asocial and atomised individuals, liberated 'real-selves', acting with licence. Such an image is a distortion, neither credible or possible. Firstly, self-determination is a struggle precisely because humans are *social* beings ; secondly, a situation of licence would undermine ones own self-determination; thirdly, as Mill puts its –

“In proportion to the development of his individuality each person becomes more valuable to himself and is, therefore, capable of being more valuable to others”. (Mill 1991 p70).

### **Inviolability, Structure, and Agency.**

In its simplest sense any discourse of the individual refers to the social recognition that individuals differ amongst themselves and that individuals and their interests should be given importance as against collectivities. More strongly, it is a belief in the primacy or supreme importance of the individual over any social group or collective body. Its starting point is *moral individualism*, the viewpoint which regards the individual as being *inviolable*, expressed by statements such as '*the individual ought always to be treated as an end in himself and never only as a means*'. Violation would fail to acknowledge or respect some morally privileged capacity - some property or characteristic which is of supreme and independent moral significance, to which unconditionally binding respect is owed, e.g. one's 'humanity', one's 'reason', etc, whatever the morally privileged capacity happens to be. This then implies that society should operate so as to benefit the individual,

giving priority to the individual's needs, interests, and rights. But this raises two difficulties.

The first of these is whether society should operate so as to benefit the individual as such, or operate so as to benefit those characteristics of the individual which confer inviolability. Individualism tends to take the former position ; individuality the latter. The second and related issue is to whom inviolability applies. It is universally agreed that it applies to all equally. But if this is the case then it must also apply to oneself – that one must respect one's own inviolability as well as that of others, e.g. 'always treat oneself as an end and never as a means'. Inviolability would place constraints on one's 'self-regarding' actions : e.g. one's conception of the good must respect one's own inviolability, etc.

These two difficulties suggest a difference of interpretation : is it the individual as such that is inviolable, or is it those characteristics which confer inviolability; does inviolability apply only in one's relations with others, but not necessarily in relation to oneself ; or does it apply to both self and others. In Chapter 2 I refer to these different conceptions as 'limited' and 'comprehensive' inviolability.

The starting point of moral individualism would be accepted by all individualists, both individualism and individuality. However, arising from it is the question of the relation between the society and the individual, the *structure / agency* debate : because the *moral* claims of individuals are prior to those of abstract categories such as nations, states, or business corporations, etc, does this mean that we can only conceive of society, and then analyse it, in terms of *individuals* ? (O'Neill 1973; Lukes 1973; Holden 1993)

'*Ontological individualism*' is the view that (in theory) the individual may exist apart from any social arrangement and is therefore intelligible, in principle, independently of society. All social facts are facts about individuals; societies themselves are nothing more than constructs out of the individual people who compose them, and so play no constitutive part in the nature of those individuals. Social entities (like corporations or States) have no existence beyond that of their individual members. Society is composed only of individuals, its character ultimately being determined by the characteristics of these constituent individuals, and the functioning of institutions is the outcome of the interactions, choices, and decisions of these individuals.

Stemming from this is *methodological individualism*, which believes that all social phenomena can be fully explained in terms of the behaviour of individuals. The explanation of social phenomena must be formulated as, or be reducible to, the characteristics of individuals. Thus, ontological and methodological individualism heavily emphasise *agency* rather than structure. They contrast with *ontological and methodological holism*, the view that each social entity (group, institution, society, etc) has a totality and independent reality that is distinct, and cannot be understood by studying merely the individuals who compose it. Individuals exist within society and embody it, they are the product of social and institutional arrangements, and are able to flourish only in the appropriate social conditions – so analysis of *structure* is crucial.

*Individualism* is associated with moral, ontological, and methodological individualisms – the longstanding charges that it is a form of asocial, atomised, abstract, individualism. In contrast, *individuality* begins with moral individualism, but rejects ontological and methodological individualism. If individuality is a deliberative shaping of a life of ‘ones own’ then it is a developmental process and struggle, an achievement not a given, that is enabled or constrained by the contexts within which it occurs. This entails that if such individuality, and issues of ‘harm’ and ‘inviolability’, are to be taken seriously then we must be alert to and respect the conditions of individuality’s achievement. Ontological and methodological individualism are consequently rejected on the grounds that they inevitably de-emphasise, naturalise, or individualise social structural and cultural contexts so that the way in which these can both enable and *undermine* inviolability are always at risk of being ignored, rendering moral individualism formal and stunted, unable to deal adequately with issues of ‘harm’ arising from the effects of those structures.

The implication then is that ontological and methodological individualism foster only a weak sense of moral individualism, and this then links up with the ‘limited inviolability’ discussed above. So what all of the above suggests is, firstly that there are two forms of moral individualism ; and secondly, the beginnings of a distinction I want to make between ‘comprehensive inviolability’, which I associate with individuality ; and ‘limited inviolability’, which I associate with individualism. This is an argument developed in Chapter 2.



## **LIBERAL-INDIVIDUALISM.**

A characteristic individualistic doctrine is that of liberal-individualism. Following a prior period of merchant capitalist development, liberal-individualism emerged in the 1600s as the opponent of the last vestiges of feudalism and absolutism, and established itself via the English, American, and French revolutions and the subsequent *Enlightenment*.

In contrast to the feudal social relations it opposed, liberal-individualism stressed the inviolability of the *rational* individual, and moral equality, and therefore attached value to individual self-interest, liberty, choice, toleration, meritocracy, and the right to private property. It was opposed to all forms of political absolutism or paternalism. Its key focus is therefore on limiting the power of the State. Society is a voluntary association of individuals, ontologically prior to the collectivity, and each striving to maximise self-interest. The State is regarded as a necessary constraint on the activities of the individual, justifiable only in so far as it protects the individual's freedom and rights : its job is to facilitate the projects or desires of individuals, not impose projects or objectives of its own upon those individuals. The State should therefore be : a neutral referee, enforcing neutral rules; be based upon the consent of individuals; and keep its interventions in their lives to the minimum necessary. It should be limited government, and constitutional safeguards should guarantee this. Its view of liberty was therefore one of non-interference, the avoidance of external constraints on the individual – 'negative liberty'. Its conception of morality was 'other-regarding' – avoidance of whatever was culturally deemed to cause harm to others.

Liberal-individualism has also been strongly associated with the free-market and capitalism, it being standardly argued by early liberals that the right to private property, and the freedom of exchange, are necessary postulates of individual freedom, and justify capitalist production relations. 20<sup>th</sup> century liberal reformism, and social democracy, argued that capital and private property provided freedom for those who possessed them only at the cost of unfreedom, a lack of effective liberty, for those who did not. This fostered an ongoing evolving split in liberalism between

the ‘classical’ liberals (*‘libertarians’*) and reformist liberals (*‘liberal-egalitarians’*). The latter weakened their allegiance to free-market doctrines and progressively sought to reconcile their beliefs with both State sponsored redistribution, a mixed private/public economy, and a more egalitarian meritocracy and social justice. The concern here is *‘effective liberty’*, access to resources and opportunities, not *‘positive liberty’*, though the latter may be connected to the former. I want to look briefly here at liberalism’s starting points in its notions of the individual, liberty, and rationality, because there are different liberal conceptions of these, which then have repercussions for the remainder of liberalism.

### **(1) The A-Social Individual.**

Both versions of liberalism remain subject to critique for their implicit conceptions of an individual autonomous self, and the possibility of ‘neutral’ rules. Both arguments are *asocial*, assuming the existence of individuals and abstract rules without a society that shapes them. There are caricatured aspects to the latter critique and certainly ‘reform-liberals’ adamantly reject it; but it nevertheless remains the case that their conception of the ‘social’ often seems to be an *inter-subjective* one rather than *structural*. (see for example Fairfield 2000; see Lukes 1973 for a critique).

### **(2) Negative Liberty.**

Linked to the previous point, liberal-individualism tends, or has tended, to take individual desires, passions, preferences, or interests as ‘givens’, the tricky bit being the presence of external obstacles to having them satisfied. For liberals, freedom is the opposite of prohibition, compulsion, and constraint, but not the opposite of internalised determination. Hence the liberal conception of freedom has not depended on the acceptance of ‘the freedom of the will’ : it pertains not to the will but to the agent. Thus, most liberals would probably agree with Locke that –

“the question is not proper, whether the will be free, but whether a Man be free”. (Locke : ‘An Essay Concerning Human Understanding’, p 244).

In other words, the question of the 'freedom of the will' should not be confused with the question of 'the freedom of the subject of will'. The subjects of will (individuals) are free when nobody forbids them to do what they want (or coerces them to do what they do not want), and usually they are quite indifferent as to whether what they want is determined by society and history. They feel free when they act in accordance with *their own* will, their 'true self', and are not concerned with the speculative problem of whether the content of their will, their identity, was freely chosen or shaped by a number of biological, social, and historical factors. This negative liberty contrasts with 'positive liberty', 'the freedom which consists in being one's own master' (Berlin 1969 : 131).

### **(3) Liberal Rationality.**

The fundamental moral values of liberalism are based on the assumption that all individuals have an equal potentiality for reason and this underlies their central moral belief in the intrinsic and ultimate value of the individual. But liberal theorists are not unanimous on what the human capacity to reason means, and both a moral and prudential / instrumental aspect to it can be distinguished (Jaggar 1983 : 29). Some liberals believe that the ends of human action are susceptible to rational evaluation ; others believe that reason is useful only in determining the most efficient means for achieving human ends. Rousseau and Kant thought the essence of reason was the ability to grasp the rational principles of morality, and it was this that distinguished humans from animals and gave them their special worth. The rational evaluation of ends is made on moral grounds – in terms of whatever moral theory they happen to hold. Whereas for Hobbes and Bentham rationality was viewed in instrumental terms as the capacity to calculate the best means to an individual's ends; the ends themselves were taken as givens. Locke and Rawls attempt to maintain a balance between the moral and the instrumental aspects of morality.

But in general, liberals view each individual as the expert in identifying their own interests, and would only criticise the rationality of an individual's desires on grounds such as their consistency. The specific content of each individual's desires lies outside the scope of rationality – reason is instrumental, concerned with means

rather than ends. Nevertheless, Hobbes and Locke gave great weight to the desire for '*reputation*' or the *esteem of others*. Rawls emphasises the desire for self-respect, though his use of the latter seems to overlap with self-esteem and the esteem of others. Liberals do tend to assume that, in a world of relatively scarce resources, each individual will be motivated by the desire to secure as large a share as possible. Hobbes is explicit about this desire for gain, and Locke similarly sees a desire for unlimited accumulation. (MacPherson 1964 : 234-6). Rawls also assumes that it is rational for those in the 'original position' to each want the largest share of primary goods. So there does seem to be an assumption that individuals typically seek to maximise their self interest.

Because different liberal theorists construe reason differently, their belief in the value of the individual is expressed in different ways. Those who emphasise the moral aspect of reason stress the value of individual autonomy – reliance on individual judgement, un-coerced and un-indoctrinated, rather than reliance on any 'authority' to decide. This view links with what I have described above as 'comprehensive inviolability'. Those theorists who emphasise the instrumental aspect of reason stress the value of individual desire satisfaction and the importance of each individual being able to pursue his own self-interest as he defines it – which links with 'limited inviolability'. We can see these different conceptions of reason, and the divergent tendencies they then generate, in a key feature of liberalism identified by MacPherson.

#### **(4) Maximisation of Utilities or Powers.**

An important thread running through Macpherson's work is his claim that liberalism had always meant freeing the individual from the outdated restraints of old established institutions. He sees a central ethical principle of liberalism as being the freedom of the individual to realize his human capacities. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century this became a liberal claim to free all individuals equally to develop and use their capacities (MacPherson 1977, pp 2, 21). At the same time, MacPherson argues that the justifying theory of liberal democracy 'rests on two maximizing claims - a claim



to maximize individual utilities, and a claim to maximize individual powers' (MacPherson 1973, p4).

The *maximization of utilities* claim appears in the liberal tradition from Locke to Bentham. Underlying it is a conception of the human beings as 'essentially a consumer of utilities' and 'a bundle of appetites demanding satisfaction'. Liberal democratic society, with its capitalist market economy, is said to maximize individual utilities by offering individuals the widest freedom of choice, and to maximize aggregate utilities equitably. Characteristic of this political theory is the unlimited right of property holding, the supposed justification of which is that unlimited appropriation is the best means of endlessly increasing productivity in the face of scarcity, which in turn is the best means of satisfying unlimited desire. This is, in part, what Macpherson refers to as the political theory of 'possessive individualism'.

The *maximization of powers* claim is, Macpherson says, evident in the work of John Stuart Mill, T. H. Green and others who constitute the liberal-democratic aspect of the critique of Benthamite utilitarianism. Here the human is not 'a consumer of utilities but... a doer, a creator, an enjoyer of his human attributes. . . not a bundle of appetites seeking satisfaction but a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted'. Liberal democratic society is said to maximize human powers; to allow individuals to develop most fully their uniquely human capacities. Macpherson notes that the maximization of powers claim is not just a democratizing addition to the earlier liberal tradition, but also a link to a pre-liberal and pre-market tradition, which includes Plato, Aristotle, and the Christian natural law tradition, and which stresses the human purpose of developing distinctly human attributes.

### **Comparing Individualism and Individuality.**

Bearing the above four points, and the previous summary of liberal-individualism, in mind, I want to briefly identify examples of what some theorists have regarded as being key features of liberal- individualism and then touch on how they compare with individuality.



Hinchman (1990, p765) feels that liberal individualism has three features that deserve special stress –

- (1) '*Withdrawal*' : Tocqueville's point about how the individual withdraws from society into a private circle of family and friends.
- (2) *Economic endeavour and enterprise* ; striving in some self-reliant and relatively unfettered (especially by government) way for achievement and success, the *acquisitive* urge.
- (3) *Human desires are given*, whether by nature or society or ones social position, and subjectively accepted as such, rather than being queried in terms of some objective standard of a worthwhile life.

The first of these seems more of an *effect* of liberal-individualism. The other two are intrinsic features of it, and seem to be closer to MacPherson's 'maximisation of utilities' than they are to his 'maximisation of powers'. There is no indication by Hinchman that liberalism is strongly associated with inviolability or moral equality.

Abercrombie argues that what characterises liberal-individualism is its *external orientation*, its relationship to the external world, and this is a crucial point –

“Individualism refers to the external - to ways of behaving in the outside world and to the quality of the social relations that connect the individual to society. Individuality is concerned with the interior of the subject”. (1986, p32)

Norton takes a similar view, suggesting that the growth and development of liberal-individualism had –

“little to do with moral life and worthy living, centring rather in such matters as geographical exploration, the development of markets, the growth of technology and its material fruits – all conceived extra-morally....what was needed ....was a moral revolution that recalled the attention of human beings from the heavens and redirected it to the earth”. (Norton 1991, p15).

The ancient, and pre-modern/feudal, worlds had each in their own ways *idealised* an 'other-worldly' or contemplative focus. 'Modernity', in the form of liberal-individualism, took an opposite direction.

The point that both Abercrombie and Norton are making is that individualism takes little direct or reflective interest in issues of self-development, consciousness, will, or personality, or issues of the worthwhile life, etc. Its self-fulfilment is much more focussed on the individual's active relations with the external world. Abercrombie (1986 p81) identifies four features of this individualism –

1. *negative liberty*, and a private sphere of non-interference.
2. *activity* : the capacity for action in the transformation of their natural and social environment. The emphasis is on *doing*, not *being*. Robinson Crusoe is the archetype, unending activity in controlling or transforming his world. As Berman quotes Marx – ‘all that is solid melts into air’ : for Berman the characteristic of modernism is a restless, ceaseless, and relentless activity *in the world*.
3. *rationality* : free activity is planned and calculating, not irrational, random, spontaneous.
4. *self-motivation* : if individuals act freely and rationally, they do so by virtue of some inner drive and they take responsibility for their actions. Motivational energy and agency comes from individuals ; society and State perpetually threaten to block this energy by controlling individuals. Individuals are ‘self-actualizing’ ; there is an inner drive for achievement and for successful fulfilment of the task.

Again, there is no explicit indication here that inviolability, moral equality, or MacPherson's ‘maximisation of powers’ are what leap to Abercrombie's mind when he seeks to characterise the essentials of liberal-individualism, though his second and fourth points might be partly read in this way.

Abercrombie confines these features to liberal-individualism, but in fact each of them might be linked to either individualism or individuality, but their specific character will change according to which of these directions they go in.

For example, regarding the second point – ‘*activity*’. An interesting implied divergence between individualism and individuality here are the modes of ‘*being*’ and ‘*doing*’. ‘Doing’ is central to all lives, so the issue is for what purpose, and the usual contrast is between ‘*being*’ and ‘*having*’ (Fromm 1976) -

Being ----- DOING ----- Having

'Doing' requires both having and being, but it can be primarily for the purpose of one or the other. The record and reputation of liberal individualism is towards the '*having*' side, whereas individuality's is towards '*being*'. As we saw above, liberalism has tended to focus on instrumental reason, the satisfaction of desires and self-interest, the maximising of personal gain in conditions of relative scarcity, MacPherson's maximisation of utilities. As Hinchman suggests above, liberal-individualism is associated with economic endeavour and an *acquisitive* urge, whilst the view of it as being a form of '*possessive individualism*' has been quite typical amongst its critics.

So there are quite different forms of being *active* : one can be endlessly busy in the world, or in *other people's* worlds, doing and getting ; or one can be busy in ones own world, or in ones own head, reflecting on the world, Aristotle's '*contemplation*', which had nothing at all to do with *passivity*.

Similarly with Abercrombie's first point, negative liberty, which links with Hinchman's third point about desires. As we saw above, liberal-individualism has tended to take desires, passions, preferences, or interests as 'givens' : people are free when they act in accordance with *their own* will, their 'true self', and are not concerned with the speculative problem of whether the content of their will, their identity, was freely chosen or shaped by a number of biological, social, and historical factors. In contrast, individuality's sense of liberty is concerned not just with external obstacles, but wants to know whether the desires or interests are *really* one's own or in some way imposed, or whether they are good ones to have, etc, because his concern is a deeper form of agency – positive liberty, or '*self-determination*', rather than only the absence of external obstacles.

Parallel divergences could be pursued for Abercrombie's third and fourth features. The point being that each of Abercrombie's four features might be deployed towards either *having* or *being*, towards individualism or individuality, but the specific character of the feature will change according to the direction it goes in.

## **INDIVIDUALITY.**

Where individualism refers to the *external* - to ways of behaving in the outside world, individuality is more concerned with the '*interior*' of the subject. Regarding Norton's point above, the growth and development of individuality is precisely to do with 'worthy living and the moral life', and with the 'interior' qualities of the person. But this is not about Tocqueville's social withdrawal, nor *narcissism*, but, as Mill puts it -

"In proportion to the development of his individuality each person becomes more valuable to himself and is, therefore, capable of being more valuable to others". (J.S.Mill 1991 p70).

Nor is individuality about any acquisitive drive : the focus is *doing and being* rather than doing and having. As we have seen, nor is Hinchman's third point applicable : individuality seems more of a dynamic notion, about self development and transformation, about processes of self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction. De facto desires may be mistaken, or self-deluded, so they are queried and challenged. Individuality regards lives as potentially being open to drastic revaluation.

We get the first sense of all this from the early critiques of liberal-individualism.

### **Early Critiques of Liberal Individualism.**

The term '*individualism*' was first used by conservatives like de Bonald and de Maistre in France to designate the disintegration of society which they believed had resulted from the French Revolution and its doctrine of individual human rights, though less pronounced responses to the English Revolution had been common a century earlier. (Taylor 1979; Joas 1996; Abercrombie 1986; Lukes 1973; Hinchman 1990; Harskamp 2001).

Their complaint was a typically conservative one : breakdown or loss of hierarchy, authority, and duty complemented by a corresponding social atomisation, diverse opinion, and anarchy.

“society is the union of minds and interests, and individualism is division carried to the infinite degree .....All for each, each for all, that is society ; each for himself, and thus each against all, that is individualism” (Louis Veuillot, in Lukes 1973, p9).

Early socialists tended to have a different perspective on it. The French socialist Leroux equated individualism with ‘everyone for himself, all for riches, nothing for the poor’, which atomized society and made men into ‘rapacious wolves’ (ibid). Both conservatives and radicals associated individualism with an intensification of the spirit of everyone for himself and the ruthless competition of all against all. De Tocqueville saw American individualism as verging on egoism, which elevated private self-interest and selfishness above all other values, in the long run sapping all forms of public life and communal relationships. The early French socialist Louis Blanc held the ruthless exploitation of man by man responsible for individualism, which he saw as a form of unrestrained self-assertion. Marx linked the liberal doctrines of liberty and equality to the requirements of the capitalist mode of production : exchange of commodities is the crucial feature of capitalism and such exchanges require equality and freedom. Its motives were economic – production for profit, rather than any deep seated liberal-individualist commitment to human inviolability and ideals of equal moral worth.

What seemed to emerge from this ongoing critique of individualism was a distinction between it and *individuality*. From Balzac onwards, many stressed the opposition between ‘*individualism*’, implying anarchy, social atomisation, self-interest and greed, and ‘*individuality*’, implying personal independence and self realization (Lukes, op cit p8). Vinet saw these as –

“two sworn enemies; the first an obstacle and negation of any society; the latter a principle to which society owes all its savour, life and reality” (ibid).

The ‘progress of individualism’ meant ‘the relaxation of social unity because of the increasingly pronounced predominance of egoism’, while the ‘gradual extinction of individuality’ meant ‘the increasingly strong inclination for minds to surrender themselves to what is known as public opinion (ibid).

This perspective was most pronounced in the German Romantics and their *expressivism* as Berlin and Taylor describe it (Taylor 1979, p1-14). Expressivism was a protest against the Enlightenment view of humans as the subject of egoistic



drives and desires for which nature and society provided merely the means to fulfilment. Enlightenment philosophy was regarded as utilitarian, atomistic, analytic, and social engineerist. For the Enlightenment, the important features of human nature were universal, and could be analysed in terms of general laws, on the model of physics. For the Romantic this is impossible : what is important is the specificity and creativity of each individual, which cannot be reduced to any set of general laws. Enlightenment thinking fragmented humans into different elements – reason and feeling, soul and body; it isolated the individual from society, and man from nature. It lacked unity. The Romantic alternative was of humans as expressive objects : human life has a unity (a work of art, a creation), the natural and the social, body and mind, reason and emotion, are interdependent ; the ‘rational’ agent is not the whole person. To see nature as just a set of objects of potential human use is to blind ourselves to the greater current of life which flows through us and of which we are a part. As expressive beings, humans have to recover communion with nature, one which had been broken by the utilitarian stance of liberal-individualism and capitalism. Expressivism entails being in touch with our own nature as well as a unity with Nature, in a form of life that is an expression of self awareness. Realizing our inner nature is a form of expression, and making it manifest is a process of creation and making. Expressivism points us to a fulfilment in freedom – a *self determination*, not simply independence from external impingements. Herder’s model of development is not that of the unfolding seed which has been ‘programmed’ to grow and is now merely pursuing its prescribed course –he conceives of human life as taking on a telos but one that must be actively and consciously pursued. Each human is capable of reaching the individual being that lies within him, his own developmental goal, by his own effort. Herder is thinking here not of unhindered growth and binding developmental goals, but of the individual’s unique core having to be actively unfolded. He emphasises the active and individual character of each person’s self-realization, that only in the creative making do we recognize our own potentiality. Creativity is seen as innate to all human action, not the preserve of artistic creation or aesthetics (Joas 1996, p 81). Kantian philosophy pushed all of this to a new and different level in a radical view of freedom as a sort of creative autonomy that transcended nature, entailing a rejection of both the liberal

utilitarian and Romantic views. Left unresolved was the desire to unite expressivism with this new radical freedom, a pursuit subsequently taken up in quite different ways by Hegel and Marx.

The Romantics emphasised the notions of individual uniqueness, originality, creativity, self-realization, in contrast to the rational, universal, and uniform standards of the Enlightenment, which they saw as quantitative and mechanical. They were concerned with formulating an ideal of development and harmonization that might prevent the newly emergent individual from becoming abstract, artificial, and lifeless. '*Individualismus*' came to be used in this sense from the 1840s in contrast to the French individualism. In this German usage the term became synonymous with the idea of individuality, which had originated in the work of von Humboldt, Schlegel, and Schleiermacher. Simmel refers to it as the 'new individualism' (in contrast to the earlier French version), the 'individualism of difference' and individuality (Lukes, op cit p18). The essential idea is that of '*self-development*'. For von Humboldt the 'true end of man' was 'the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole –

“that toward which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts....is the Individuality of Power and Development”. (Lukes 1973, p69).

“the ultimate object of all our mortal striving is solely to discover, nourish, and recreate what truly exists in ourselves and others” (von Humboldt 1854, p 103)

Each person has a naturally given, undeveloped, potential for 'harmony' that must be elaborated in a unique way, though as Goethe insisted this urge toward growth is stimulated by both their natural and cultural surroundings, it required a dialectic between the self and the world (Hinchman 1990, p 763). This Romantic emphasis on the individual's '*uniqueness*' seems to refer *not* to being unique for the sake of it, or at least not simply to this, but to '*authenticity*' and *self-determination* - the subject must recognize his life as his own, as having unfolded from within, rather than being part of an artificial 'mass' moulded entirely by society. This was individuality as a development of inchoate selfhood towards its own realization in and through the world. The 'true self' was not something present from the start, to be listened to but not developed. For the German Romantics, *Bildung* or *self-cultivation* was essential

to individuality, the guarantee that one's nature would not remain forever hidden away.

However, the whole Romantic version of individuality makes claims and uses a terminology that were commonplace at the time, but which are either dubious or open to misinterpretation a couple of centuries later. It seemed to convey the impression of Nature as a sort of demiurge that created individualities much as it created trees or flowers in its struggle for self-actualization. This '*naturalizing of individuality*' is at odds with our own tendency to emphasise the discontinuity between individuality and nature. But it was not unusual for the times of course, but even then was contradicted by Goethe's stress on the role of culture and 'self-cultivation', and by the logic of their own position. Just as plants are environmentally dependent then so too do individuals have roots in their culture and social relations, and can be nurtured by a culturally benign setting. The Romantics were clearly aware of this, and their emphasis on the 'natural' seemed to be a counterbalance to what they regarded as the culturally hostile environment of their times, one that squashed individuality rather than nurtured it.

From Humboldt and the Romantics, individuality enters into the liberal tradition via J.S. Mill. For Mill, individuality was the development and expression of one's powers, one's capacities and potentials, and the whole of his political and social philosophy is imbued with this self-developmental ethos. The naturalistic *metaphors* remain strong in Mill, though his view of human nature is a flexible one. His target is the 'social', the way in which society and custom have become the enemy of individuality, stifling its development, and he puts great emphasis on cultivating 'self-culture', individual creativity and will, as a means of resisting this. The Romantic idea of individuality was also a crucial element in the ethical basis of Marxism. Marx's view of humans is of social beings with a wide range of creative potentialities, whose 'own self-realization exists as an inner necessity, a need', and he shares the Romantic view of the artist as the paradigm of the creative individual. Humans are creative producers, equipped with the means to do and create, but they can only develop this through their social relations, through cooperation and working with others. Humans are social beings through and through and, in contrast to Mill, Marx's conception of self-development is essentially of the *species* as a whole rather than the isolated



individual, only in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions. The obstacle to individuality is not society as such but capitalist society.

The self-development and personal individuality of the early Romantics eventually metamorphed and degenerated into an organic and nationalistic theory of community. Individuality was ascribed no longer merely to persons, but to supra-personal forces such as the Nation or the State, a development subsequently picked up by Berlin as being a tendency of all notions of self-realization. As Lukes described its range –

“The notion of self development thus specifies an ideal for the lives of individuals- an ideal whose content varies with different ideas of the self on a continuum from pure egoism to strong communitarianism. It is either anti-social, with the individual set apart from and hostile to society (the early Romantics), or extra-social, when the individual pursues his own path free of social pressures (as with Mill), or highly social, where the individual’s self-development is achieved through community with others (as with Marx or Kropotkin). In general, it has the status of an ultimate value, an end-in-itself “. (op cit, p 72).

In contrast to the Romantics an alternative approach is found in Bosanquet’s model of individuality based on the development of consciousness in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. This is a process whereby immediate, taken-for-granted, aspects of the self must first be externalised and negated in order finally to be re-assimilated into an emergent individual identity. Bosanquet (Boucher 1997) avoided the sort of naturalistic images found in the Romantics and Mill, there is no naturally given ‘true-self’ (though there is a ‘mystical’ drive, a ‘*conation*’, which we can ignore here). Humans are self-conscious beings, and as self-consciousness one is subject to the influences of society. What makes an individual is the way one *actively shapes these influences*, the creativity of the process. Bosanquet emphasised the difficulty of this process, a kind of continuous self-overcoming rather than any organic development, an ongoing struggle to pull together the chaos and inertia of one’s life into an integrated whole. By making self-consciousness a core of individuality Bosanquet seems to move in the right direction, making it possible to see self-consciousness as being at the centre of a three-way relation between the *individual*, the *social*, and the

*natural*. One must see the individual in terms of all three : their capacities and potentials; the mores, values and roles received from society; and in the individual struggle of self-consciousness to develop, reshape, or transcend these influences. Without the natural and the social, individuality would be *empty* ; without the 'struggle', it would be an *illusion*. The first and decisive aspect of individuality is negativity and transcendence : being able to see that I am not identical with any of my social scripts, that I can stand outside them, judge them, change them, imagine they could be different. This is a struggle. But to assume that the very *possibility* of being able to do so is an illusion because, for example, we are indelibly socially determined, would be a mistake and a denial of human possibility. The crucial political issue is whether society and State support or hinder this struggle.

Individuality then becomes a standard of what humans could become, and we can evaluate the success or failure of a society to promote the self development of its members. This then provides an alternative to the one standardly used in societies of liberal-individualism : the degree of political liberty; economic prosperity; fairness in the distribution of wealth, power, and prestige; levels of satisfaction and integration (Hinchman op cit, p779).

This early 'self-developmental' and individuality focus in the intellectual critique of liberal-individualism, begun by the Romantics, continued via Mill, and then by T.H.Green, other reform liberals, and Marxists, was soon surpassed by the growth of labour movements and reform liberal, social democratic, and socialist critiques of liberal-individualism which were focussed much more directly on issues of liberal-capitalism, economic production and distribution, social justice, and political democracy. Self-development and individuality continued as an undercurrent and background, but they were elusive goals for any practical political agenda and liberal reformism was the political priority.

Liberal-reformism was a shift in the discourse of liberal-individualism, the start of a slow evolution from 'classical liberalism', or what might now be described as 'libertarianism, towards liberal-egalitarianism. This shift reflected divergent tendencies or contradictions within liberalism – for example MacPherson's choice between maximisation of utilities or maximisation of powers. The latter is much

closer to individuality than the former, but this is not to imply that reform liberalism or liberal-egalitarianism is the same as individuality.

## **KEY FEATURES OF INDIVIDUALITY (AND INDIVIDUALISM).**

The thesis looks at six key features of individuality and, where possible, contrasts these with the corresponding features of liberal-individualism. The primary objective is an attempt to characterise and clarify individuality, using liberal-individualism as a useful contrast concept, so I cannot claim to have been comprehensive in relation to the latter. There is a dearth of literature and analysis on individuality, so an aim of the thesis became an attempt at reconstruction and clarification.

The key features and contrasts, are as follows –

### **Individuality**

Comprehensive Inviolability.

Self-determination.

Self-realization / Authenticity.

Internal Goods and Value.

Moral Self.

Communalism.

### **Liberal-Individualism.**

Limited Inviolability.

Agency.

Autonomy.

External Goods and Value.

Moral Minimalism.

Society/Association.

The Chapter sequence is identical to the above, though with one added on the possibility of autonomy. To look briefly at each of the above features, and each Chapter, to give some idea of their content and the sequence -

### **Inviolability.**

Chapter 2 looks initially at the '*context of inviolability*', why humans should be regarded as being inviolable, and finds this in the characteristic of humans as beings of potential, 'doers and creators', but incomplete and vulnerable, a being of potential rather than a being that is already fixed and finalised. And this creates responsibilities towards self and others.

There are then two separate issues. The first and main issue is what I described above as being two forms of moral individualism - limited and comprehensive forms of inviolability – the former linking with anti-perfectionism. Individuality has a comprehensive and substantive notion of inviolability. Firstly, it involves respecting those human characteristics which confer inviolability, and this then leads into the importance of self-determination and self-realization, and what I refer to as '*ethical autonomy*'. Secondly, it applies to both oneself and others, the self-regarding (ethical) and other-regarding (moral) spheres are interdependent, and respecting ones own inviolability creates the basis for respecting the inviolability of others. In contrast, for individualism, inviolability is limited and formal : the inviolability of oneself is optional – there is no obligation to respect those characteristics which confer it ; so there is also no interdependence or continuity between self- and other-regarding spheres. The individual is free in his own private sphere to pursue whatever conception of the good he chooses, his only obligation being to respect the agency of others. But this then creates a tension, or contradiction, between the self-regarding and other-regarding spheres.

The second issue is the relation of moral individualism to structure and agency and, thereby, to ontological individualism. Moral individualism valorises *agency*, so individuality argues that we must be alert to the ways in which *structures* constrain or enable agency and cause harm; whereas individualism plays down the impact of structures, individualises or naturalises them, taking an ontological individualist position. This is touched on throughout the thesis but is particularly the focus of Chapter 4.

### **Self-Determination.**

'Self-determination' is a key characteristic of individuality which emerges out of the inviolability context. The usual contrast here is between positive and negative liberty - freedom is important not simply as a means to the fulfilment of just any desires and preferences, but as a means to 'self-development' and being 'one's own master'. Chapter 3 is concerned with clarifying the different conceptions of self-

determination, of what it is, why it is valued, and some problems arising : the distinctions between self-determination, autonomy, and agency ; and the problem of the subjectivity of autonomy. Liberal-individualism's conception of limited inviolability, its ontological individualism, and its ensuing anti-perfectionism, mean that it operates primarily with a notion of 'autonomy' as agency, negative liberty, and toleration rather than self-determination. But this then leads into the liberal distinction between the Right and the Good : the Right is the State-led objective standard of 'the good', a necessary 'rules morality' to counter-balance limited inviolability.

This preliminary review of what 'self-determination' means and why it is valued seemed necessary before going into the specific issue of in what sense it is at all possible.

### **Is Autonomy Possible ?**

Any conception of individuality requires that self-determination is a possibility, and Chapter 4 seeks to show that it is one. Both critics and supporters of autonomy seem to misconceive both 'autonomy' and the 'social'. Self-determination can never be absolute, there has to be something 'unchosen' at the core of it. We look here at the '*natural*', the '*social*', and the '*individual*', the relation between them, and how these can shape our autonomy and individuality, both enabling and constraining them. There is then a need to elaborate upon the simple structure / agency dichotomy, and the Chapter concludes with a range of levels of agency and self-determination.

### **Self-Realization and Authenticity.**

Critics of self-realization and authenticity seem to see both as either : something pre-given, a denial of autonomy; or as an extreme 'self-interestedness' in conflict with 'justice'. Both these interpretations are rejected. For individuality, self-determination and self-realization are inseparable, both emerging out of the inviolability context, and both linking to the interaction between the natural, social, and individual. Self-realization refers to the development of capacities and potentials, the latter being the



'unchosen' that underlies self-determination. Chapter 5 clarifies the concept and the different conceptions of self-realization and authenticity. It rejects the idea of them as being the actualisation of a pre-given self, in favour of a creative and self-determining process of self-making and self-activity, combining elements of the natural, social, and individual. Personal authenticity (being true to self) combines self-determination and self-realization. Inter-personal authenticity relates to Shakespeare's point, 'to thine own self be true ...thou canst not then be false to any man'. This is developed, picking up the theme of the interdependence of the self- and other-regarding, and exploring aspects of this in the work of Buber, Rousseau, and Carl Rogers. The Chapter ends with a review of the contrasting notions of self-realization and authenticity found in Charles Taylor and J.S.Mill.

Individualism's conceptual equivalent of self-realization, authenticity, and self-determination is an optional autonomy : the individual is free to pursue whatever conception of the good he chooses ; there is no inviolability constraint to suggest that this should be a self-realizing or authentic one.

### **Internal Goods and Value.**

The first part of Chapter 6 is concerned with subjective and objective conceptions of the good, and concludes that these are inseparably interdependent so that a hybrid of both is unavoidable. But the main purpose of the Chapter is to propose and clarify the notions of internal and external goods as conceptions of the good.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between individualism and individuality is that between '*having*' and '*being*' discussed earlier, and in Chapter 6 this is tied to the distinction between *external goods* (wealth, power, prestige, influence) and *internal goods* (well-being/fulfillment/flourishing). The record of liberal-individualism is in practice concerned with individual development, achievement, and freedom of choice in relation to *doing and having – external goods*. In contrast, the focus of individuality is more about an individual development, achievement, and choice in which *doing and having* is subordinate to *doing and being – internal goods*.

Internal goods are directly linked to self-determination and self-realization. For individuality the condition to aim at is a life *rich* in internal goods and with a *just* share of external goods.

The bulk of the Chapter is concerned with clarifying the meaning of 'internal goods', a critique of MacIntyre's use of the concept, and applying it to Mill's distinction between higher and lower goods.

### **The Moral Self.**

Chapter 7 returns to the relationship between inviolability and the interdependence of the self-regarding and other-regarding introduced in Chapter 2. Individuality works with a conception of a 'moral self' founded on comprehensive inviolability and an 'ethics of character', these being tied to self-determination and self-realization/authenticity. This is a conception of ethics and morality as internal goods rather than an external goods.

This contrasts with what is characterised as the 'rules morality' and 'moral minimalism' of individualism – morality as an external good. Liberal-individualist morality is other-regarding, concerned with rules regulating the relationship between self- and other, but not with the relationship of the self to himself. There is a separation of the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding' spheres, and a contradiction between the culturally approved pursuit of self-interest in the former and its supposed renunciation in the latter.

The interdependence of the self- and other-regarding, and the notion of morality as an internal good, are reviewed in relation to Aristotle (briefly), Kant, and Mill.

### **Communalism.**

Conceptions of community derived from liberal individualism emphasise the subjective and psychological aspects of shared identity, and an assumed harmony or unity of interests, but often in the absence of any substantive structural or moral foundation for these – so that there is a perceived tension between individual self-interest and community, this then leading to forms of 'collectivism' or

‘communitarianism’. In contrast, for individuality, conceptions of comprehensive inviolability, self-determination and self-realization, internal goods, and the moral self, all imply, and require, some complementary substantive conception of community. ‘Communalism’ begins with a structural and moral basis that is sufficiently strong and flexible that it fosters individuality, diversity, and difference, community as an ‘internal’ rather than ‘external’ good - a community that rejects the *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille* of individualism, but revives the *Wesenwille* of *Gemeinschaft*.

This sequence might feel awkward in places, e.g. Chapter 4 might have been done before Chapter 3, or Chapter 7 immediately after Chapter 2. But each part of the sequence as it is seemed dependent on what came before it, so it was retained despite any awkwardness. The thesis might have focussed on issues closer to a traditional or current liberal agenda : a critique of liberal-egalitarianism or of liberal-democracy ; the anti- state perfectionism versus perfectionism debate; issues of civic virtue and citizenship, etc. Alternatively, it might have focussed on different features of individuality, or on specific theorists associated with it, or an in-depth analysis of just one feature. Instead, the aim has been to cover a wide range of features to show how these differ from liberal-individualism and how, collectively, they can be characterised as constituting a discourse of individuality that is radically different from liberal-individualism.



## CHAPTER 2 INVIOABILITY.

The concern in this short Chapter is the notion of human inviolability and some of its implications as they are relevant to the thesis in general, so it is not an all encompassing survey of the topic. Its key focus is the way in which inviolability is interpreted differently by individuality and liberal individualism –

- the relationship between inviolability and self-determination, the way in which the former valorises the latter whilst simultaneously placing constraints on its exercise.
- how what inviolability implies is interpreted differently by individuality and liberal individualism.
- some implications for liberalism.

One goal and ideal of individuality, and perhaps of individualism, is personal autonomy via self-determination, the claim that personal autonomy is an essential ingredient of the good life, that humans live best when they have control of their lives, exercising self-control, and living a life of reflective self-direction. But if individuality is a deliberative shaping of a life of ones own then it is a developmental process and struggle, an achievement not a given. It involves some sense of what MacPherson (1973) calls '*developmental power*' - the individuals ability to develop and use his capacities, via a process of self-determination. And such self-determination and its value derives from, and is inseparably connected with, notions of individual inviolability and moral individualism. Thus, the development of our capacities as agents capable of shaping our own lives by pursuing projects, and attempting to realize values that we in some fashion conceive for ourselves, is of special moral value, a task of the first importance, and the basis of individual autonomy. This juxtaposition of the 'moral' and 'personal autonomy', normally viewed as being contradictory, is clarified below, and also requires a clarification of the conventional conception of 'moral autonomy'.

Human inviolability refers to the ultimate 'moral' principle of the supreme and intrinsic value or dignity of the individual human being, an idea that has

progressively come to pervade modern moral and social thought in the West since the 1600's. In its contemporary vernacular of '*respect*' it likewise pervades everyday life : "*Diss me, and you die*", might be an extreme and distorted version of it, but it nevertheless conveys the contemporary importance of both the idea and the practice. The individual is regarded as being inviolable because violation would fail to acknowledge or respect some human property or characteristic which is of supreme and independent moral significance, to which unconditionally binding respect is owed. But in virtue of *what* features humans have a dignity, a worth or a value, which confers an inviolability that should be respected and protected, is a perennial philosophical question. Some clues to the answer might be obtained from Greek mythology.

In the ancient Greek myth of creation the Deity fashions the Earth and everything on it, and then assigns to Epimetheus the work of distributing to the newly made creatures the attributes that will equip them for survival – the tiger its teeth and claws, the fish its fins and gills, etc – making all such creatures what they are by metaphysical necessity. But when he arrives at humans Epimetheus finds that his bag of attributes is empty. His brother Prometheus comes to the rescue by stealing from the gods their most precious possession, 'fire', with which to outfit humans for living in the world. But this '*most precious possession of the gods*' seems unlikely to have been physical fire but '*spiritual fire*', the power of *creation*, those capacities and qualities that enable beings to be creators. With it, humans are equipped to complete the work left unfinished by the Deity and Epimetheus, the work of fashioning themselves as a process of creation. As such, we are incomplete and vulnerable, a being of potential and potential worth, rather than a worth that is already fixed and finalised. In this sense, individuals are nature's incomplete product, given to humans as a devolved responsibility. As a being of potential, each individual is *inviolable*, and this potential and inviolability create responsibilities : for the individual himself, to use his capacities, to develop his potential worth ; and for others, to nurture and enable, for the well-being of each is inevitably inseparable from the flourishing of others : to violate another is to simultaneously legitimate the right of others to violate oneself. It is this status as a person, a being of potential, which is itself valuable and

confers inviolability, rather than any single trait such as our capacity to reason or create. (Hampton 1997, p47).

The Renaissance humanist Pico della Mirandola expresses a similar point, in the words he attributes to God –

“We have given thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that...thou mayest...possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire....In conformity with thy free judgement in whose hands I have placed thee, thou are confined by no bonds, and thou wilt fix the limits of thy nature for thyself.....Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou ....are the moulder and the maker of thyself ....Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from the mind's reason into the higher natures which are divine”. (quoted in Lukes 1973, pp53-4).

Humans are not products of fixed instincts, our behaviour is not biologically predetermined. We have capacities and potentials but are vulnerable and our development is dependent upon others and the social world we are born in to. What those others, and society, do to us, whether they enable or constrain, is crucial to how we develop. From the start, this is a *political* situation. What MacPherson (1973, p42) calls ‘*developmental power*’, is ‘*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*’. ‘Capacities’ refers to what there is to be exercised ; the amount of a person’s capacities is not the same as his ability to use them - capacities depend on innate endowment and past external impediments; the ability to use them depends on present external impediments. He contrasts this with ‘*extractive power*’, the ‘*power over others, the ability to extract benefit from others*’. Humans are beings of potential, but vulnerable and dependent : the power exercised over them can be nurturing, benevolent, and developmental, or it can be neglectful, coercive, and ‘extractive’. *Inviolability* requires the former rather than the latter : if nature or the gods do not predetermine and impose a hard-wired blueprint or script then nor should we ; it is our responsibility to facilitate and enable, rather than impede or sabotage, the developmental task that nature leaves incomplete.

What we see here are the two aspects of individual development touched on in the Introduction –

**Self-realization** – that all individuals should have the opportunity to realize capacities and potentials.

**Self-determination** – that all individuals should as far as possible determine and control the course of their life.....that self-determination has an intrinsic value.

But the lack of ‘metaphysical necessity’, the creative work of fashioning ourselves, is both our freedom and our predicament, whether as a species or as individuals, the source of our greatest achievements, our existential *angst*, and our worst crimes against ourselves and our world. The freedom and the predicament are symbolised in Plato’s image of the human soul as chariot, charioteer, and two contrary-minded horses pulling in different directions – that to be human is to be a challenge to oneself, an identity problem and a potential achievement. It is a problem of deciding what to be and do ; of recognizing good, and choosing which goods to aim at as the goals of ones life ; of having the means and the opportunities, and being able to do it. It is to be able to shape ones life and develop ones potentialities, to make of oneself the best that one may. But human self-awareness, reason, and imagination disrupt the ‘harmony’ of animal existence, makes of humans an anomaly : part of nature, subject to its physical laws and unable to change them, yet transcending the rest of nature. As Erich Fromm (1949, p40) puts it –

“he is set apart while being a part....being aware of himself, he realizes his powerlessness and the limitations of his existence....never is he free from the dichotomy of his existence : he cannot rid himself of his mind, even if he should want to ; he cannot rid himself of his body as long as he is alive – and his body makes him want to be alive. Reason, man’s blessing, is also his curse; it forces him to cope everlastingly with the task of solving an insoluble dichotomy”.

For Fromm, human existence is in a state of constant and unavoidable disequilibrium, an ‘*ontological insecurity*’ as others have called it (Giddens 1991 p 43-6). Humans are the only animal for whom *their own existence is a problem* which they have to solve and from which they cannot escape. This split in the nature of humans leads to what Fromm calls ‘existential’ dichotomies because they are rooted in their very existence; they are contradictions which they cannot annul but to which they can react in various ways, relative to their culture and character.

What the above suggest is that to be human is to innately possess potential worth and, secondly, to bear the moral responsibility to create or develop this worth. This is



a key part of what is referred to below as '*ethical autonomy*'. The *rights* of individuals follow from this *responsibility*, and such rights must be respected because this respect is a necessary condition for maximising the realization of potential human value.

What the stories also give us therefore is a rough foundation for inviolability and self-determination, and the related notions of equality and toleration. Individuals are inviolable because of their incompleteness, vulnerability, and potential, but also, by virtue of these, because of their capacity for self-determination. In all this they are indelibly equal, deserving of equal respect as 'ends in themselves'.

Much of all this is expressed in the history of moral philosophy, where there are perhaps two general answers to the question of what confers inviolability. The first posits universal *rationality* (or, more importantly, the potential for it) as the basis of inviolability. The second emphasises *autonomy* - the ways in which humans are distinctly beings who consciously pursue some conception of the good, and it is in terms of self-determining moral endeavour that humans have a claim to dignity and worth. For Kant, these features are distinctive of a person and shared by all persons, at least potentially, and give life its intrinsic value and worth. Usually then, individuals are regarded as being inviolable because they are possessed of some property or characteristic which is of supreme and independent moral significance, to which *unconditionally binding respect is owed*. For contemporary liberals it is the reason based capacity for project pursuit (Lomasky), or for selecting and pursuing a conception of the good (Rawls), etc. Rationality confers the capacity to reflect and deliberate, to imagine and create, and we are not therefore trapped within a narrow circle of interests as animals are. We are active and creative, not merely passive and reactive. External stimuli and physiological drives can be harnessed to pursue some conception of a plan of life or a project. This potential capacity to follow purposes and projects confers a basic dignity and worth and is the basis of the respect which each person owes to another – that each person is an end in himself. Allowing people to be self-determining is generally felt to be the only way to respect them fully as moral beings – to deny it is to treat someone as a child or an animal. Individuals' special dignity and value entails that they have the liberty and capacity to live their lives as they wish, within limits specified by the inviolability of self and others. This



potential for rationality is *equally* possessed, but not necessarily equally developed, *so the circumstances of its development are of particular importance*. Thus the importance of the privileged moral status of persons, and their resulting equal entitlement to freedom, autonomy, consideration, and respect.

There are many issues arising from, or related to, all this, but the crucial one for our purposes is the implications of inviolability for individuality.

### **Comprehensive Inviolability : Ethical Autonomy and Moral Autonomy.**

The problem I want to identify is illustrated by David Johnston (1994, p71-5) in his distinction between three types of autonomy : *agency*, *personal autonomy*, and *moral autonomy*. 'Agency' is the weakest form of autonomy. 'Personal autonomy' is liberalism's equivalent of self-determination. His 'moral autonomy' is what would normally be referred to simply as 'morality'. Regarding it he makes two points. Firstly, he describes moral autonomy as existing when a person has an effective sense of justice – recognizes that *others* are agents like himself, with projects and values of their own, and that these may impose limits on the things he can do in pursuit of his own projects and values if these would affect others negatively. A lack of moral autonomy is an inability to think of others as anything more than objects that are available to be used for one's own purposes – an example, perhaps, of MacPherson's 'extractive power'. Secondly, he suggests that one can be an agent or personally autonomous without being morally autonomous. Both of Johnston's points are typically liberal ones, but there are some fundamental difficulties with them. For individuality, moral autonomy is crucial to personal autonomy, and it is precisely when they are separated that problems arise.

As we have seen, for moral individualism the individual is inviolable, and is so because violation would fail to acknowledge or respect some morally privileged capacity - some property or characteristic which is of supreme and independent moral significance, to which unconditional respect is owed. If we affirm this intrinsic value of individuals, and certainly liberalism does, then we must accept the view that *individuals have responsibilities towards themselves* – not just to respect

others, but also to respect ones own inviolability. For example, Kant denies that human agents can do with themselves as they choose –

“a man can be his own master (*sui iuris*) but cannot be the owner of himself (*sui dominus*) (cannot dispose of himself as he wishes) – still less can he dispose of other men as he pleases – *since he is accountable to the humanity in his own person*”. (Kant 1991 p 90 my italics).

The implication here is that we have a ‘duty’ *to ourselves*, though the connotations of ‘duty’ perhaps make it inappropriate : we have a *self-interest* in the inviolability of both our self and others, precisely because we are both, and this is connected in Chapters 5 and 6 to Rousseau’s ‘amour-soi’, Plato’s ‘*care of the soul*’, and Aristotle’s ‘*self-love*’; our inviolability generates responsibilities that are a part of our ‘*positive self-regard*’ and *self-worth*. Nevertheless, there are traditional problems with any notion of a ‘duty to self’ : if an obligation is to ourselves then, formally, we can free ourselves from it at will, so it cannot therefore be an obligation. In this sense the obligation is voluntary, subject to our consent, and necessarily so. The responsibility is self-chosen, and commitment to it must be self-determined – imposition or paternalism would risk compliance rather than consent, make it fragile, and perhaps undermine it altogether. So if ‘duty’ was the appropriate concept then, in Kant’s terms, it would be an ‘*imperfect duty*’.

But in the particular context we are concerned with here we cannot easily free ourselves from this obligation. As noted previously, to be human is to innately possess potential worth; as a being of potential each individual is inviolable, and this potential and inviolability create *responsibilities* : for the individual to use his capacities, to develop his potential worth ; and for others to nurture and enable. The *rights* of individuals follow from this *responsibility - to both self and others*, and the responsibilities and rights are inseparable. Separating them, by making responsibilities to oneself optional, would risk undermining responsibilities towards others. Would a duty to respect the inviolable characteristics of others, but not respect the same characteristics in ourselves, actually work in practice ; any more than would one in which we want the benefit of being treated by others as inviolable, but lack any obligation to respect our own inviolability ? Such a one-sided system of responsibilities and rights would seem to risk undermining inviolability.

For Kant the issue is one of 'imperfect duty'. Imperfect duties require the adoption of ends, but not the performance of particular actions, since an imperfect duty "allows a latitude for free choice" and is "wide and imperfect" (Kant : 1991, 6 p 446). Our obligation is to pursue the end of developing ourselves, but the duty can determine "nothing about the kind and extent of actions themselves but allows a latitude for free choice" (Kant 1991, 6 p 445). Imperfect duties contain such latitude precisely because human ends, and so the natural capacities serving those ends, differ across persons, cultures, political, economic and social settings. Which capacities to develop and in what proportion is left to each to decide "in accordance with his own rational reflection about what sort of life he would like to lead and whether he has the powers necessary for it" (Kant 1991, 6, p 445). But Kant does restrict us to the development of capacities required for plans that are not immoral, impossible, or quixotic.

As Colin Bird puts it in *'The Myth of Liberal Individualism'*, the fundamental consideration for inviolability is the independent value *of* the individual, and of the particular characteristics which give humans this value, rather than what is of value *to* individuals (Bird 1999, p158 and passim).

This presumably must apply both intra- and inter-personally, there is a symmetry between self- and other-regarding principles. We are required to act with respect towards ourselves, and thus lack absolute freedom in the self-regarding sphere. An implication of this view is that there could be a close relation between respecting ones own inviolability and respecting the inviolability of others : firstly, that the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding' are interdependent rather than separate ; and secondly, that other-regarding responsibilities may be committed to in a *minimalist* way if not matched by any robust commitment to self-regarding ones. Thus, for Kant, the existence of duties to oneself is a crucial precondition for all other duties –

'For suppose that there were no such duties (to oneself) : then there would be no duties whatsoever, and so no external duties either. For I can recognize that I am under obligation to others only in so far as I at the same time put myself under obligation, since the law by virtue of which I regard myself as being under obligation proceeds in every case from my own practical reason ;

and in being constrained by my own reason I am also the one constraining myself ....'. (Kant 1991 p 214)

The immediate consequence of this argument is that inviolability values and thereby enables personal autonomy, whilst simultaneously doubly constraining it. Firstly, that ones own conception of the good must respect those characteristics that constitute *ones own* inviolability.

Secondly, the responsibility for self-development cannot require violating *perfect duties* – human self-development must give way to concerns , enshrined in perfect duties, about justice, and human rights, etc. – it cannot value developing oneself by way of wronging others. It also forbids wronging oneself in pursuit of imperfect duties, devoting ones life to self indulgent pleasure or quixotic whims. But failure to pursue self development because it would threaten *perfect duties* to oneself or others is clearly excusable. The economically or socially oppressed who have no meaningful opportunities for self development are not thereby blameworthy or responsible.

Consequently, for individuality, the inviolability basis of self-determination will entail two forms of moral individualism, what Crosby calls ontological value and moral value (Crosby 1996 pp240-42) –

**ontological value** : that individuals are recognized as having an *ontological value* as a given ; that to be human is to innately possess potential worth ; that they are possessed of some morally privileged capacity and therefore have rights of self-determination which may not be violated ; and that we must therefore act with due respect towards all agents, *including ourselves*.

**moral value** : the latter point raises the second sense of moral individualism - the *moral value of persons* : this is not a given but a self-determining *task*, entailing a '*moral vocation*', an individual *responsibility* to discover, create, and develop potential worth. Such moral value can be stronger or weaker, can wax and wane, and has a contrary opposite – moral disvalue (or moral evil).

We need some appropriate terminology to convey what is being described above. As previously indicated Johnston uses '*moral autonomy*' in a typically liberal fashion to describe our concern and respect for the 'inviolability' of others but, firstly, says



nothing of respecting the inviolability of ourselves and, secondly, sees moral autonomy as being optional.

With regard to his first point. My own focus is to suggest that the absence of self-regarding respect and inviolability risks undermining our respect for the inviolability of others. In other words, that the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding' cannot realistically be separated. Because this view is not generally acknowledged or accepted then it would be confusing to use *moral autonomy* or just 'morality' to describe both. In this context the usual distinction is between morality and ethics : the former being used to refer to the rules which should govern people's relationships with one another, and the proper limit on the pursuit of their own interests. In contrast, ethics is concerned with how one should behave towards oneself, and specifically with what ones good consists in, what would contribute to ones well-being or fulfilment. In these terms, what is being described above is a distinction and relation between **ethical and moral autonomy**. Thus, for individuality, self-determination is morally based in a conception of individual inviolability, an *ethical self*, and the notion of *ethical vocation*. The self-regarding – *ethical autonomy* – then forms an ethical basis for other-regarding actions (or moral autonomy).

Regarding Johnston's second point above. He regards moral autonomy as 'optional' in that there is no necessary link between it and agency or personal autonomy. Conversely, I would suggest that although this may be accurate for the agency/moral autonomy relation found in liberal-individualism, it cannot apply to the personal/moral autonomy one. To ignore the autonomy of others, to deny them concern and respect, is to simultaneously condone those others doing likewise to you, and thereby undermines the foundations of ones own autonomy. *Self-determination and moral autonomy are symbiotic* ; the self-regarding and other-regarding are interdependent; and other-regarding responsibilities seem likely to be committed to in only a *minimalist* fashion if not matched by any robust commitment to self-regarding ones.

To clarify these distinctions –

**ethical autonomy** : the 'inviolability' of self, and therefore of others, is internalised as a supreme value – the 'comprehensive inviolability introduced in Chapter 1. It



concerns how, given the inviolability constraint, one should behave towards oneself, and specifically with what ones good consists in, what would contribute to ones well-being or fulfilment. It entails ones own self-interest in self-determination and self-realization – to use and develop ones capacities, which requires doing so in a self-determined way. Autonomy is valued as an intrinsic good. Ones ethical and moral principles are genuinely ones own in the sense of rooted in ones own character and commitments rather than mindless conformism, or unthinking obedience to authority, or a prudential rather than principled act. As Feinberg (1989, p36) describes what he calls ‘moral authenticity’ –

“The person whose moral beliefs are not rooted in her own system of reasons is an object for the contempt of bullies and demagogues. Her ‘convictions’ are so shallow they can be lightly washed from her brain by seduction, indoctrination, or suggestion. The morally autonomous person, provided she is free of coercion, will change her own convictions only in response to argument ; and she will not abandon her foundation beliefs (even if she is forced to act against them) even under intimidation”.

If we simply borrow our views, principles, and commitments from some alleged authority whose word is ‘law’, not attempting to fit our reasons into a coherent scheme, or if we drift along with the opinions and practices characteristic of our social relations, culture and context, then we fail to be ethically autonomous.

None of this is a given, but a self-determining *task*, entailing a ‘*moral (or ‘ethical’) vocation*’, an individual self-interest and *responsibility* to discover, create, and develop potential worth. Such ethical value can be stronger or weaker, wax and wane. In its absence, the ‘self-regarding’ private sphere is characterised by the self-interested pursuit of ones ‘own’ preferences and fulfilment, however the individual chooses to define these. In contrast, in ethical autonomy the individual recognizes that inviolability creates responsibilities towards oneself, and that ones own conception of the good and ones relations with others must therefore respect ones *own* inviolability. This ethical self and ethical autonomy then forms an intra-personal basis for other-regarding actions (or moral autonomy). If you do not respect, in yourself, those characteristics that confer inviolability, then it seems unlikely that you will respect the inviolability of others, if only because your conception of what this means will be limited. As Selznick puts it –

“We cannot value ourselves – cannot preserve our own integrity – if we do not value others. And to value others we must cut through the pretense and artificiality of everyday life”. (Selznick 1992, p71)

The demands on the individual will, for example, particularly concern his own most important interests : his interest in forming, and living, a conception of the good, of what is meaningful and valuable in his life. In general, the processes of *self-discovery*, *self-definition*, *self-direction* will require on the individual's part various capacities and skills / autonomy competencies : self-knowledge and reflexivity, choice and decision-making, rationality, and strength of will, and authenticity - the life chosen and created should be 'authentic' – their own rather than imposed or imitated.

**moral autonomy** : the *practice* of self-determining freedom should entail respect for the *principle* of it and, therefore, for the exercise of it by others. Self-determining freedom cannot be licence. I can only be a self-determining individual if you respect my right to be so, and if I act in a way which diminishes your freedom then I necessarily condone you diminishing my own. Self-determining freedom must be committed to the equal moral worth of persons, to a strong version of moral equality. The individual ought always to be treated as an end in himself and never only as a means, so that a lack of moral autonomy is an inability to think of others as anything more than objects that are available to be used for ones own purposes. In Johnston's use of the term, it is when action recognizes that others are agents like oneself, with projects and values of their own, and that these may impose limits on the things that can be done in pursuit of ones own projects and values.

What this means in practice will be determined or conditioned by the structural and cultural context, and the prevailing conceptions of *harm*. One aspect of this is whether or not the prevailing culture endorses some conception of ethical autonomy, of comprehensive inviolability : in its absence, moral autonomy risks being reduced to a *moral minimalism*, in constant need of being maintained by the State, as in the liberal notions of the Right and the Good.

**Egoism / altruism** : there is a traditional and assumed contradiction between self-determination and moral autonomy. Liberal moral philosophy has tended to see its

central problem as being that of egoism and altruism, of why I should be 'moral', or why I should respect the interests of others and behave altruistically towards them (see Grimshaw 1986, p166). Moral autonomy is usually identified with altruism, and personal autonomy with egoism or selfishness. Personal autonomy is viewed as a prescription for self-absorption / narcissism, indifference to others, and as such it jeopardizes morality. Certainly both Johnston and Feinberg (op cit) regard moral autonomy as optional to personal autonomy. Perhaps there is always some inevitable tendency in this direction. But it seems probable that any such tendency is certainly stronger when self-determination is separated from ethical autonomy. *If respect for self is never a decisive consideration for individuals in their relations with themselves, why should it be so in their relations with others ?* If morally privileged human capacities can be over-ridden at will when they are attached to oneself, how could they suddenly acquire strong moral significance when attached to others, or to myself in relation to others ? Taking the inviolability of the self seriously provides a basis for respecting the inviolability of others. When the inviolability of the self is optional or absent then the self-determination / moral autonomy contradiction is fostered.

**Equality :** The inviolability principle is strongly *egalitarian*, respect is equally due to all persons in virtue of their being possessed of a set of characteristics that they share in common, and respecting them entails doing all one can to maintain and increase their freedom. It might be argued that since individuals may possess these characteristics to different degrees they are therefore persons to different degrees but as Lukes comments –

“it is the existence of the characteristics, not the degree to which they are possessed or actualised, which elicits respect” (Lukes 1973, p126)

Lukes contrasts respecting persons with praising or admiring them. We distribute the latter unequally because we praise or admire people for characteristics which single them out from others. We praise someone for his particular achievements and admire someone for their particular qualities, whereas we respect someone as a human being in virtue of the characteristics they share with all other humans. This corresponds to Crosby's distinction between ontological and moral value discussed above.

## **Liberal-individualism : Limited Inviolability.**

The overall approach outlined above raises a problem for liberalism, or at least for its anti-perfectionist varieties. We saw in Chapter 1 that there are two strands of liberalism : the one outlined above, which attributes a moral aspect to reason and values individual autonomy as an intrinsic good ; and another strand which sees reason as instrumental to the individual's self-interested pursuit of his own fulfilment however he chooses to define it. These are two quite different perspectives on autonomy. However, libertarian and egalitarian versions of anti-perfectionism seek to *combine* them, and therein lies the liberal problem : namely, that *the inviolability of the individual is not compatible with the parallel liberal value of the inviolability of a private sphere of thought and action*. The definitive liberal concern is to define a private sphere of conduct insulated from 'public' (i.e. State) interference, an area within which citizens are free to think and act as they wish (which combines the 'asocial' and freedom as 'negative liberty' assumptions). There are no internal boundaries, no core elements, within this sphere of private action towards which individuals are bound to act in particular ways. This is the characteristic liberal individualist distinction between self- and other-regarding activity, with its links to voluntarism, tolerance, anti-paternalism, state neutrality, and the subsequent liberal distinction between the Right and the Good.

From this perspective it is not the job of the liberal state (or of theories which justify it) to evaluate or over-rule the moral standards which individuals choose to endorse in the living of their personal lives, unless this interferes in the lives and activities of others in certain ways. As Colin Bird suggests, the traditional liberal way of expressing this commitment to a private sphere is the thesis of '*self-ownership*' : individuals are to be regarded as the exclusive owners of their bodies, lives, personal assets and resources, and are free to make of them what they will (Bird 1999 Ch 5 *passim*). How such self-ownership is interpreted may vary significantly, the obvious divergence being that between libertarian and egalitarian liberals. But all liberals share in common a commitment to 'self-ownership' in that they accord to individuals a unique and irreplaceable value / inviolability, which then allows them to pursue

their own conception of the good within a protected sphere of activity. This thereby acknowledges their dignity and special value - self-ownership requires that individuals have the final authority over decisions that concern themselves alone.

But if we respect individuals preferences within their private sphere in this way then we cannot claim to be basing our theory on the intrinsic value *of* individuals. Rather, we attempt to maximize that which is of value *to* individuals. Comprehensive self-ownership allows individuals to veto self-regarding responsibilities, so that any commitment to respect individual inviolability is optional - what is of value *to* individuals is greater than the independent value of any morally privileged capacity that confers inviolability.

One problem this creates for liberalism relates to *moral autonomy* – respecting *others*. As discussed in the next Chapter the liberal State will often take the lead in promoting moral autonomy (in Johnston’s sense, described earlier) - for example, the distinction between the Right as opposed to the Good – via appropriate statutory regulation. But this then risks creating a tension or contradiction between the public and private spheres because there is no ethical basis for moral autonomy, and the statutory regulations are viewed as an external imposition not committed to, interpreted in different ways, rejected altogether, or prudentially adhered to only because of the fear of sanctions.

The consequences of this ‘partial inviolability’ view for liberal conceptions of self-determination are explored in the next Chapter. But a summary of some of its implications can be itemised here. -

*Firstly*, inviolability in the private sphere should put limits on ones behaviour towards ones-self, and therefore on ones own conception of the good. The latter must respect ones *own* inviolability. This is what I have referred to as ‘*ethical autonomy*’. The responsibility for this is the individual’s, but -



*Secondly*, development of the responsibility to respect one's own inviolability will be powerfully influenced by enabling and constraining structural and cultural contexts and forces, including the role of the State.

*Thirdly*, if inviolability in the private sphere is optional, because of 'self-ownership', then such 'inviolability' is also too weak to be used as an argument against external / state interference.

*Fourthly*, if the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding' are interdependent rather than separate, then other-regarding responsibilities may be committed to in only a *minimalist* fashion if not matched by any robust commitment to self-regarding ones. If you do not respect, in yourself, those characteristics that confer inviolability, then it seems unlikely that you will respect the inviolability of others, if only because your conception of what this means will be limited.

*Fifthly*, what 'moral autonomy' means in practice will be determined or conditioned by the structural and cultural context, and the prevailing conceptions of *harm*, which are in turn shaped by the prevailing conceptions of the good. One aspect of this is whether or not the prevailing culture endorses some conception of 'ethical autonomy'.

The '*limited*', rather than '*comprehensive*' *inviolability* view also has consequences for the way in which society is conceived and analysed. I suggested above, and in the fourth point, that the absence of 'ethical autonomy' as a basis for 'moral autonomy' risks 'other-regarding' responsibilities being committed to in a minimalist fashion – what is discussed in Chapter 7 as 'moral minimalism'. One offshoot of this is 'ontological individualism'.

## **MORAL INDIVIDUALISM AND ONTOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM.**

The definitive liberal concern to define a private sphere of conduct insulated from 'public' interference, an area within which citizens are *free to think and act as they wish*, combines the '*asocial*' and freedom as '*negative liberty*' assumptions, and therefore seems to assume an *ontological individualist* position. As suggested in Chapter 1, liberal-individualism tends, or has tended, to take desires, passions, preferences, or interests as 'givens'. The subjects of will (individuals) are free when

nobody forbids them to do what they want (or coerces them to do what they do not want), and usually they are quite indifferent as to whether what they want is determined by society and history. The '*freedom to think and act as they wish*', baldly stated, seems sociologically naïve. Alternatively, if it is a reference purely to State interference, then it seems politically naïve, a limited notion of power. It is in such senses that liberal-individualism's moral individualism is always at risk of being tied to ontological individualism.

The 'inviolability' view outlined above is typically a key aspect of '*moral individualism*'. The latter indicates a viewpoint which gives great moral importance to the individual. But the traditional liberal assumption has been that such moral individualism is tightly connected to *ontological individualism*, so that the two are interdependent : that because we should respect individuals, and the moral claims of individuals are prior to those of abstract categories such as nations, states, or business corporations, etc, then we can only conceive of society, and then analyse it, in terms of individuals. But the whole argument and connection seems confusing, and it is argued here and in subsequent Chapters that if inviolability is to be taken seriously this link between moral and ontological individualism should be severed.

Moral individualism might argue that the proper kind of moral importance can be given to the individual only if individuals either (a) *are*, or (b) are *assumed* to be, or (c) *should* be, in some way agents or autonomous entities, rather than social products that are merely pieces of the social fabric. The key issue is that if the character and behaviour of individuals are socially determined and the product of the social environment, to what extent could we ever say that they are making decisions of their own, expressing their own will – can we say that people make their own decisions at all ? It is felt that such a view of individuals turns them into objects rather than subjects, trivialises them, denigrating human agency, and must therefore be rejected. The crucial point seems to be the (a,b,c) distinctions above : firstly, moral individualism supports agency and autonomy; and, secondly, individuals should not be secondary to collectives. All moral individualists would agree on both points. The main issue is whether agency / autonomy, as an agreed ideal, (a) always exists in reality because only individuals, and not collectives, can act, or (b) in reality is often

conditioned by 'collectives', or (c) is always inevitably determined by 'collectives'. Ontological individualism assumes (a) and then simultaneously denies the existence of collectives.

Ontological individualists deny that social entities, (like corporations or States) have any existence beyond that of their individual members, and methodological individualists believe that all social phenomena can be fully explained in terms of the behaviour of individuals. Society is composed only of individuals, its character ultimately being determined by the characteristics of these constituent individuals, and the functioning of institutions is the outcome of the decisions and interactions of these individuals. Groups, institutions, structures and cultures, are viewed as collections of individuals, their actions and relationships, and have no independent existence or causal / explanatory significance. However, just because only individual choices and decisions can *actualize* structures and cultures this does not mean that those choices and decisions are not conditioned or determined by those structures and cultures. To assume that it does mean this would be to equate all *action* with agency or autonomy, and the effect of that would be to *individualise or naturalise* social and cultural structures. The consequence of this is that it *subverts inviolability*. For individuality, if moral individualism is to be taken seriously it must be separated from liberalism's ontological individualism : that the latter's empiricism and selective vision on social / cultural structures renders its moral individualism formal and stunted, unable to deal adequately with the issues of '*harm*' and individual '*inviolability*' that arise from the effects of those structures. Thus the traditional critique that liberalism is a form of abstract individualism - that liberals are insensitive to facts about the social embeddedness of the individual, viewing individuals as asocial and atomised. This is then open to Isaiah Berlin's claim that every form of autonomy has in it, to some degree, a –

“process of deliberate self-transformation that enables (men) to care no longer for any of (society's) values, to remain, isolated and independent, on its edges....I retreat into my own deliberately insulated territory, where no voices from outside need to be listened to, and no external forces can have effect” (Berlin 1969, pp135-6 Four essays on liberty OUP).

- which is a charge perhaps better directed at an atomistic version of liberal autonomy, rather than being applicable to all versions of autonomy. Although contemporary liberals strongly reject this charge, their acceptance of situated agency is always at risk of being formal and superficial because of the difficulty of adequately theorising the significance of those social and cultural structures that define liberal societies but which are taken as givens, e.g. liberal arguments and illustrations love to focus on current issues relating to religion, homosexuality, abortion, etc, (issues concerning the 'Good'), but rarely give attention to those issues of economic efficiency, private profit, funding, and 'managerialism' (issues concerning the 'Right') that impact much more significantly on most people's lives.

This thesis holds the contrary position : that *respecting* individuals entails the rejection of ontological individualism on the grounds that its *tendency* to de-emphasise, naturalise, or individualise social structural and cultural contexts means that the way in which these can both enable and *undermine* inviolability and self-determination are always at risk of being ignored, rendering its moral individualism formal and stunted, unable to deal adequately with issues of 'harm' arising from the effects of those structures.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The starting point for both individuality and liberal individualism is the notion of human inviolability. From this, liberal-individualism derives the importance of self-determination, and individuality derives the importance of both self-determination and self-realization.

Individuality has a comprehensive conception of inviolability, starting with the ethical obligation to respect ones own inviolability, that we have duties towards ourselves and thus lack absolute freedom in the self-regarding/private sphere. This leads to a conception of ethical autonomy which then forms a substantive base for moral autonomy.

Liberal-individualism has a partial conception of inviolability, focussing on respect for others, as a counterbalance to being free to pursue ones own conception of the



'good' in the 'private' sphere. Ethical autonomy is absent – an optional extra that we can take or leave according to our own preference. But this absence then has repercussions for how 'moral autonomy' is conceived – risking it being a moral minimalism. One effect of the latter is liberalism's traditional connection between moral and ontological individualism : the latter naturalises or individualises the effects of structures and cultures, camouflaging the ways in which they undermine inviolability.



### **CHAPTER 3      SELF DETERMINATION.**

In the previous Chapter it was suggested that there is a strong link between inviolability and self-determination. But because interpretations of inviolability differ then so do conceptions of self-determination. This Chapter is concerned with –

- the meaning of self-determination : what it is and why it is valued.
- how the different interpretations of inviolability lead to different senses of self-determination.
- perfectionist and anti-perfectionist versions of it.
- a critique of the liberal model of the Right and the Good.
- 

The issue of whether autonomy might be at all possible is touched on here but dealt with in Chapter 4.

A perennial issue is the relation between self-determination and autonomy. Both are slippery concepts, they are used interchangeably but might in fact be different; and both are frequently and loosely used as synonyms for freedom. In general terms, freedom refers to negative liberty and effective liberty : the ability to act without external constraints, and also with sufficient resources and power to make ones freedom and desires effective. ‘Autonomy’ is frequently used to describe such freedom : it specifies conditions – constraints on government, or supplies of material resources – that free people to act as they choose. But neither of these ensure autonomy or say nothing about how people should live. Two forms of autonomy address the question of what kind of life is desirable – moral autonomy and personal autonomy. We introduced the former in the previous Chapter, so the focus here is personal autonomy.

It might be worth repeating what self-determination is not, e.g. the charges that it is selfish and self-regarding, at odds with altruism or normal concern for others, a world of asocial and atomised individuals, liberated ‘real-selves’, acting with licence, etc, but this was dealt with in Chapter 1. What Chapter 2 has added is that self-

determination is an essential feature of 'ethical autonomy' and, therefore, a basis of respect for others.

There are two aspects of self-determination which require clarification - what it is, and why it is of value, and we consider each in turn.

## **WHAT IS SELF-DETERMINATION ?**

Self-determination is described by Johnston (1994, p71-5) as '*personal autonomy*' as distinct from '*agency*'. It is the version of self-determination associated with what I describe in Chapter 2 as 'comprehensive inviolability' and 'ethical autonomy' as opposed to liberal or 'limited inviolability'.

Self-determination can be taken broadly to indicate an all-encompassing version of freedom - both negative freedom, i.e. freedom from the undue interference of others, and positive freedom, i.e. freedom to determine one's own life to as great an extent as is compatible with a like opportunity for all (Peffer 1990 p123). But at the heart of freedom as self-determination is the moral value of *autonomy* : an individual is free only if he is autonomous, and he is the latter only if he is in control of his own life - that one should have a significant impact or effect upon the direction of one's own life and the circumstances under which one must live. A person governs himself when he is *not* governed 'from the outside' by someone else, and when he *does* govern from the inside - when he is 'in control of himself', rather than a situation of *laissez-faire* (no one being in control) or *heteronomy* (control by another). In contrast to freedom, autonomy concerns the self-reflective and deliberative character and authenticity of the desires that move one to act - that autonomy is a function of conditions both external and internal to the individual, whether the latter are psychological or cultural barriers. As an ideal it entails choosing one's well-being in a self-determined and deliberative manner - who one understands oneself to be, how one wants to live, the person one wants to be, one's relation to others and the world. Feinberg (1989, pp30-43) reviews a range of synonyms for such self-determination : self-possession, distinct self-identity, authenticity, etc. The usual intention is 'self-possession', to take possession of ourselves and to act through ourselves, to become

*'the captain of our souls'*. Being in control of one's own life particularly applies to one's interest in forming a conception of the good, of what is meaningful and valuable in life, and living it. It requires that an individual's thought and action becomes *his own* in the sense of not being determined *unilaterally* by agencies or causes outside his control. It refers, as Lukes puts it, to –

“the capacity of a person to form intentions and purposes, to become aware of alternatives and make choices between them, and to acquire control over their own behaviour by becoming conscious of the forces determining it : both internally, as with repressed and unconscious desires and motives, and externally, as with pressures exerted by the norms they follow or roles they fill..... and either to submit to them, recognizing their necessity, or to become independent of them.....an individual is autonomous to the extent to which he subjects these to conscious and critical evaluation, and forms intentions and reaches practical decisions as the result of independent and rational reflection”. (Lukes 1973, pp 52, 131).

and integral to this is to go beyond agency / basic autonomy by developing the capacity to recognize -

“that circumstances are not fixed things to which I must adapt my will and within which I must find some residual area of choice : rather, my freedom is to be measured in crucial part by the extent to which I can effect my will upon them”. (Aronovitch 1980 p 371)

In other words, to shape the conditions of one's life and therefore make possible the free and conscious shaping of oneself.

The notion of autonomy that has gained common usage in contemporary social and political theory is generally that of the rational self-directing person – often attributed to Mill and Green, and more recently to Joseph Raz, Stanley Benn, and Ronald Dworkin. As Raz puts it-

‘the ideal of personal autonomy is the vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny, fashioning it through successive decisions throughout their lives.’ Raz 1986, p369).

The exact characterisation of autonomy will vary, but some common features are-

- (1) substantial degree of independence from *the will* of others.
- (2) regular critical scrutiny of one's practices, beliefs and goals.
- (3) background conditions such as being free from coercion or manipulation and having adequate options to choose from.

Such 'personal autonomy involves deliberating and deciding what to do with our lives, with how to lead a good life, and have those things that a good life contains. We have many more wants than we can satisfy and social morality provides no clear guidance about satisfying them.....thus, intra-personal conflicts loom large. We must evaluate and choose between our conflicting wants and their possible satisfactions. We do so by developing our conceptions of good lives, and we choose and evaluate from the perspective that conception provides. This process of developing, choosing, and evaluating is a key aspect of self-determination. An agent chooses autonomously to the degree that she chooses her action from a wide array of alternatives that has not been deliberately reduced by the actions of others, she chooses on the basis of her own perception of the strength of the reasons favouring the different courses of action available, and her perceptions of reasons are formed by background values that have emerged from the agent's independent reflective scrutiny.

This assumes that we should, can, and do 'stand apart' or 'step back' from our current ends and question their value to us. We deliberate about which ends are worth pursuing, and the best means to such ends, and do so carefully because we know we could make wrong decisions. Some things are worth doing and others are not – we distinguish between worthwhile and trivial activities, even if we are often not sure which things are which. It is important to us that we do not lead our lives on the basis of false beliefs about our activities and their value. We want to have those things which are worth having, but our current preferences reflect our current beliefs about what those worthwhile things are. It is not always easy to tell what is worth having, and we could be wrong in our beliefs – whether it be specific decisions, like what food to buy, or wider preferences about what sort of career to pursue, or life to lead, or world to live in. When we lack adequate information, or have made mistakes in calculating the costs and benefits of a particular action, then what is good for us can be different from the preferences we currently have. We may be mistaken about

the value of our current activities, a good life may be different from the life we currently believe to be good. Autonomy is the task of making these judgements, of recognizing their difficulty and fallibility.

Meyers (1989, p20) seems to sum up the different senses of autonomy by defining it in terms of three processes of what might be called 'self-creation' –

**Self-discovery** : one must know what one is like – *who am I and what drives me ?*

**Self-definition** : one must be able to establish one's own standards and modify one's qualities to meet them – *who and what do I want to be ?*

**Self-direction** : one must express one's self identity, ones character and commitments, in action.

But self-discovery would seem to be a part of self-realization and authenticity, whilst autonomy would be the processes of self-definition and self-direction. If the first two are absent then what appears to be self direction could turn out to be disguised heteronomy – the internalised direction of others. But self-discovery and self-definition will also inevitably be socially influenced. Similarly self-definition may be absent, as in some simplistic versions of 'self-actualization' or 'authenticity'. Liberal-individualism does tend to ignore 'self-discovery', perhaps seeing a clash between it and autonomy, whereas individuality's 'self-realization' focus would emphasise it as a necessary part of self-definition. But these are all issues for a later Chapter.

Meyers (1989, p48) also suggests, but this is questionable, that personal autonomy would involve some sort of ongoing '*life planning*' on both an episodic scale ('What do I really want to do *now*'), and a grander scale of *how do I really want to live my life*. But such rampant 'life planning' seems neurotic and guilt inducing, carries 'rational self-direction' too far and begins to sound dangerously instrumental and obsessive : for example, the individuality tradition has favoured an *expressive* rather than *instrumental* reflexivity and this distinction is explored in Chapter 5.



But what all of this illustrates is an initial difficulty that is elusive and awkward to pin down. For some theorists self-determination seems to be an issue of power and control – as in Aronovitch’s quote above, power over one’s own life in its widest sense, ‘*self-activity*’ as it is referred to in Chapter 5, a combination of autonomy and self-realization, the development of one’s capacities and potentials. For other theorists it is about ‘*rational self-direction*’. For example, Feinberg (1989 p33) uses self-determination to mean ‘*self-creation*’ (though not in the simplistic sense of the latter), and this seems closer to the ‘power and control’ sense of the concept. But his general sense of autonomy is ‘*rational self-direction*’, and he also uses this interchangeably with authenticity (as do others). There’s a sense of different concepts being conflated and eroded in the process. ‘*Self-creation*’ and ‘*rational self-direction*’ are not the same thing, no more than are *autonomy* and *authenticity*. It may make sense to use autonomy to describe ‘*rational self-direction*’, and this would be a component feature of self-determination but not its only feature. We return to this issue later in this, and subsequent, Chapters.

## **THE VALUE OF SELF-DETERMINATION.**

We have previously seen in Chapter 2 that self-determination has a special and inviolable status, that it is of intrinsic value, and in Chapters 5 and 6 I will argue that self-determination is an integral part of ‘self-realization’, authenticity, and ‘*internal goods*’ as opposed to ‘*external goods*’. But we need first to look in more detail at some of the reasons given for the special status of self-determination, and as implied above individuality and individualism have a difference of emphasis.

### **Individuality : Self-determination as Self-Development.**

Self-determination is regarded as being crucial because, as Aronovitch (1980. p366) suggests –

“what warrants the demand that (some capacity) be realized by men is not that men must develop what is uniquely human in them but that they must develop that capacity *without which they cannot pursue the development of any other capacity*”.

this is the capacity to –

“shape my circumstances and myself, (for) unless I realize my capacity for doing these things, I cannot set myself to realizing any other, further capacities ; whether I get to develop any further capacities and which ones and to what extent – all these things are then subject to the vagaries of circumstance or the whims of others” (Aronovitch 1980 p 365-6).

MacPherson, in his notion of ‘developmental power’, suggests the key factor in determining the amount of power we have is whether the ability to use our capacities is in our own hands or someone else’s –

“capacities .... in order to be fully human, must be under one’s own conscious control rather than at the dictate of another .... A man’s activity is to be regarded as human only in so far as it is directed by his own design”. (MacPherson 1967, p56)

The emphasis here is on the development of one’s powers and presupposes *self-activity*, that is, the initiation of purposes and projects of one’s own, for the reason that one’s own powers or capacities cannot be developed by someone else’s activity. This also entails that self-development cannot take place if one’s activity is controlled by others. Moreover, such self-developing activity cannot be subordinated to the mere activity of meeting needs that are determined externally (e.g. if consumption is to contribute to the development of one’s power, it is only to the degree that it is subject to the purposes and rational choices of agents, with respect to *which* needs or wants are to be met and also *how* they are to be met).

This echoes J.S.Mill’s emphasis : whereas for liberals self-determination and choice is more about liberty as such, for Mill they are primarily about *self-development*, for which liberty is a requirement. G.W.Smith (1991) suggests that for Mill the necessary and sufficient conditions for freedom are –

- (a) *the power to self-develop* : ‘self-culture’, the capacity to alter ones character (self-mastery), the impediments to which are internal.
- (b) *the opportunity for its exercise* : external impediments to which are not simply the State but coercive social opinion.

(c) *The desire to do so* : the impediments being the tyranny of the social and custom.

Liberalism can assume (a) and (c) exist, and that liberty must focus on (b) and the role of the State. For Mill (a) and (c) are the bigger issue.

Freedom and choice are important for Mill in so far as they develop a person's potentialities. Mill's central objection to blind conformity to custom is that if a man accepts custom simply because it is custom then he does not make a choice. To that extent he is less of a human person, for he has failed to develop in himself "*any of the distinctive endowments of a human being*" (Mill 1991, p116). Those distinctive human faculties of -

"perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice.....in discerning or in desiring what is best. The mental and moral... powers are improved only by being used" (Mill 1991 : p116).

"He who chooses his plan for himself employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide and, when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one". (Mill 1991 : p117)

For Mill, value comes not simply from living this life but from choosing it. Unless we choose our own pleasures and activities, we cannot completely appreciate and understand their value, and we miss an opportunity to exercise our powers and in so doing to amplify them. People must be allowed to choose for themselves because free choice is itself a most important ingredient of the kind of happiness Mill was concerned to promote. Men who choose in conformity with custom, not because they independently agree with it, but blindly and without thought, or because they are pressured to do so, cannot by definition be happier than those who choose freely. Happiness of this kind is not what Bentham conceived. For Mill, happiness is not something that can be got through any means. It is not just what men believe or how they feel which is important; the manner in which they come to have certain beliefs and attitudes is also important. Within the range of alternatives available to seekers

of valuable sources of happiness, not only is value lowered if the activity is not followed as a result of autonomous choice, but the value of an activity can be raised if it is the result of such choice –

“If a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode” (Mill 1991 : p 120)

This in part explains why, for Mill, the path of self-development is an individual one, why even when individuals have ‘reached a certain level of self-development’ they can act only as guides to others, not as authorities. Someone with a ‘certain measure of development’ who tries to act as more than a guide and imposes judgments of value on others thereby paradoxically undermines that claim to development.

“The power of compelling others...is not only inconsistent with the freedom and development of all the rest, but corrupting to the strong man himself”. (Donner 1991, p130).

“...the love of power and the love of liberty are in eternal antagonism...The desire of power over others can only cease to be a depraving agency among mankind, when each of them individually is able to do without it” (Donner 1991 : p130).

So the view that an ‘elite’ are justified in fixing the value choices for society and imposing them on the less developed is self-defeating on Mill’s principles and contradicts Mill’s view of how development is achieved. Self-developing adults are in the best position to know what will advance or impede their development and which activities and pursuits are in harmony with our nature. Any attempt to impose values or pursuits on us, even in the name of better values only serves to short circuit our self-development, which must unfold from within.

This emphasis of Mill’s on self-determination is inseparably tied up with his distinction between *higher and lower pleasures*, the two together seeming to be essentially about self-realization, about the extent to which activities develop capacities and potentials which deepen a person’s individuality and so help him to develop himself. In other words, *self-development*, by one’s own *creative* activity, and not simply development as such, is the greatest good. Inflicted poetry might cause someone to develop, but not to *self-develop* – better the fool satisfied than

*forced* to become a dissatisfied Socrates. In this sense, free choice-making is important not simply as an expression of freedom but because the act of choice, and the reflection, deliberation, decision-making, and responsibility it entails, develops capacities, it's about self-development. Such '*self-activity*' combines the notions of free (self-determined) activity with that of creative (self-realizing) activity – not controlled by outside alien forces but directed by oneself, a theme we develop in Chapter 5.

Consequently, self-determination is of value because it concerns those actions that –

- express own purposes rather than being imposed, are ultimately self defined and self-controlled.
- enable individuals to learn from mistakes, to experiment, and thereby measure the value of things and discover ways of life best for them.
- serve to realize chosen projects.
- involve the development of capacities.
- respect the development of both self and others and don't cause harm.

Thus, for individuality, self-determination is tied to some sense of self-realization, the development of capacities and potentials and, *in this sense*, authenticity - being 'true to self'.

### **Individualism : Autonomy as Endorsement.**

For liberal-individualism the focus has been narrower than the above, namely the importance of the individual *endorsing* his actions and beliefs. The quality of an individual's actions depends on the quality of her intentions, and paternalistic coercion, threats, and other manipulations (other than rational persuasion) cannot improve the quality of an individual's intentions. Achieving the good is an achievement only when one intends the good and intends it for the right reasons, not for ulterior motives such as are induced by threats and manipulation when they are effective. An intervention that interferes with another agent's choice of conduct cannot increase the value of that conduct if the interference lessens the degree to which the conduct is autonomously chosen. One reason for this is that no one may be



in a better position than I am to know my own good – even if I am not always right, I may be more likely to be right, for me, than anyone else can be. Thus, for Kymlicka, ‘self-determination’ requires that we lead our life from the inside–

“no life goes better by being led from the outside according to values the person does not endorse. My life only goes better if I am leading it from the inside, according to my beliefs about value. A...policy that violates this **‘endorsement constraint’**, by trying to bypass or override people’s beliefs about values, is self defeating....It may succeed in getting people to pursue valuable activities, but it does so under conditions in which the activities cease to have value for the individuals involved. If I do not see the point of an activity, then I will gain nothing from it. Hence paternalism creates the very sort of pointless activity that it was designed to prevent”. (Kymlicka 2002, p216)

A person’s endorsement of a conception of the good is necessary for it to be a good for her. Benn argues that autonomy rests on rationality and self-reflectivity, and that in the absence of these –

“the nomoi that govern him can be those absorbed uncritically and unreflectively from parents, teachers, and workmates ....Such a person ....*governs himself*, but by a nomos or set of standards taken over from others” (Benn 1975 pp123-4).

The uncritical and unreflective rational chooser is referred to by Benn as ‘heteronomous’, and by Gray (1983) as ‘autarchic’, and what they lack is self-reflectivity. For these, the limits of choice, however rational, are set by the norms and practices of the group ; whereas autonomy requires that they be self-imposed, adopted as a set of standards arrived at through critical reflection. And as Gray describes it, this requires that –

“The autonomous agent must have distanced himself in some measure from the conventions of his social environment and from the influences of the persons surrounding him”. (Gray 1983, p24).

Self-reflectivity provides that critical distance. But none of this insists that the group’s standards must be rejected in whole or in part – simply that they be

scrutinized; autonomy does not require that that one's rules and standards be created *ex nihilo* or *de novo*.

Dworkin gives arguments for the endorsement constraint grounded in his theory that the value of someone's life comes from it being a skilful response to the challenges facing her. He points out two options regarding the relationship of endorsement to the components of a good life. For the '*additive*' view, someone's endorsement is a sufficient condition for increasing the value to him of the components of his conception of the good –

“If he endorses those components , then this increases the goodness of his life; it is frosting on the cake. But if he does not, the ethical value of the components remains”. (Dworkin 1990, p50).

For Dworkin's own preferred position, the '*constitutive*' view, someone's endorsement of a component of the good life is a necessary condition for that component to increase the good in his life –

“no component may even so much as contribute to the value of a person's life without his endorsement” (Dworkin 1990 : p50).

Arneson (2000 pp 4-5) disagrees, and appears to take Dworkin's 'additive' view.

Arneson suggests, first, that even if one accepts the claim that nothing can be valuable unless autonomously chosen, this does not rule out the possibility that paternalism might be justified. Restriction of choice now, even to the extent of forcing a single choice upon the individual, can pave the way to autonomous choice of that good or others later. He says this would be easier to bring about if the coercion does not force upon the agent a single option, but only prohibits some tempting bad ones while leaving many other options open. This is obviously an accurate account of what actually happens in practice via processes of socialization, social conditioning, and State paternalism, and the exercise of power involved in these. But his position simply raises other questions and issues : firstly, who defines the imposed 'good', by whose or what standard is it deemed to be 'good' ? Secondly, the subsequent autonomous choice of a previously imposed 'good' proves

nothing other than that choices can be successfully conditioned, but leaves us with the problems of determining whether it is morally justifiable, and of distinguishing between conditioned and autonomous choices. Thirdly, the only basis upon which imposition might be justified is that the 'good' it imposes does in itself foster autonomous choice, and that this is an agreed objective standard of the good.

Arneson's second argument is that it is implausible that no value can be attained except via autonomous choice. To undertake action involves the exercise of agency but, Arneson suggests, agency can be exercised entirely admirably under conditions of coercion and duress, or when the agent is moved to act by motives other than the good that is being achieved. He suggests, for example, that someone might perform splendidly when motivated solely by the pay for the work done. The mercenary motive may subtract from the value of the achievement but does not reduce it to nothing. Again, there is clearly some truth in Arneson's arguments, but he leaves too much unanswered. Autonomy is likely to be best appreciated when the subject has also experienced heteronomy; and it is anyway highly improbable that all one's activities can be autonomous ones. The issue is the balance between coercion and autonomy, and in relation to what decisions – a paternalistic ruling on the wearing of car seat belts is not equivalent to the paternalistic imposition of a conception of the good. Nor is a mercenary motive equivalent to coercion.

Arneson concludes that one can achieve goods that are valuable, and whose value enhances one's life, even if one fails to appreciate their value, or recoils from one's own achievement in response to its coerced or manipulated character. He agrees that achievement does more to enhance an agent's life, other things being equal, when the agent wholeheartedly endorses the doing and properly rates its value. But autonomy is still one value among others, and can be outweighed. Thus, for Arneson, the arguments that try to establish on conceptual grounds that coercion and manipulation of an agent cannot improve the quality of her life do not succeed. We return to this issue in Chapter 5 with the relation between *internal and external goods*.

In contrast to Arneson, for liberal anti-perfectionists the endorsement constraint is applicable to most valuable and important forms of human activity, and – as we saw

earlier - some would certainly argue that it makes perfectionism self-defeating. As Kymlicka argues -

“Even if the State can encourage or force people to pursue the most valuable ways of life, it cannot get people to pursue them for the right reasons. Someone who changes their lifestyle in order to avoid state punishment, or to gain subsidies, is not guided by an understanding of the genuine value of the new activity”. (Kymlicka 2002 p277).

This may be a valid point against coercive and manipulative forms of perfectionism, but, as Kymlicka agrees, it does not rule out short term state intervention designed to introduce people to valuable ways of life –

“One way to get people to pursue something for the right reasons is to get them to pursue it for the wrong reasons, and hope they will then see its true value”. (Kymlicka 2002 p277).

So the endorsement constraint by itself cannot rule out all forms of state interference. But there are further problems with it.

### **Deliberation and Revisability.**

A precondition of self-determination must be –

“that we be free to question our beliefs, to question them in the light of whatever information, examples, and arguments our culture can provide”. (Kymlicka 2002 p216)

But to what degree do we have control over the values and beliefs we acquire ? We arrive at beliefs through the assimilation of, and deliberation on, our background beliefs about principles acquired from our culture and context, the natural world, our selves, and the social world in which we live. A danger for liberalism is that it is always at risk of giving the impression that people are in control of what they believe– that we choose, select, or decide on our beliefs from the range of options presented by our cultural context, much as we choose a flavour of ice cream. But the latter is a *voluntary* choice, an act of will. In contrast, *deliberative* choice is an act of reason and reflection. Dworkin denies that people choose their beliefs in the first sense –



“it is not part of any argument I have used so far that some or any or all convictions and other preferences are voluntarily chosen. Liberal equality does not assume that people choose their beliefs about ethics any more than their beliefs about geography. It does suppose that they reflect on their ethical beliefs and that they choose how to behave on the basis of those reflections”. (Dworkin 1990 p108)

In this deliberative sense it is possible to speak of choosing our beliefs, as an act of reason and cognition. On this view of self-determination individuals are free to question their beliefs or their participation in any existing social practices and opt out of them should those beliefs or practices seem no longer worth pursuing. Individuals are not *defined* by their involvements in any specific relationship since they are free to question and reject these. As Rawls summarises the liberal view on this : “*the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it*” (Rawls 1971:560), by which he means we can always step back from any particular project and question whether we want to continue pursuing it; no end is exempt from possible re-examination or revision by the self; I can always envisage myself with different ends to the ones I currently have.

As Kymlicka puts it–

“we have an ability to detach ourselves from any particular social practice. No particular task is set for us by society, no particular practice has authority that is beyond individual judgement and possible rejection.....Nothing is ‘set for us’; nothing is authoritative before our judgement of its value”. (Kymlicka 2002, p223)

This is liberalism’s ‘*unencumbered self*’ and the ‘*revisability thesis*’ which, as Fairfield describes it, is –

“the thesis that moral agents, while situated beings with situated capacities, are nonetheless capable of revising their moral ends, questioning convention, reasoning about norms, reflecting on practices, refashioning their identity, reconstituting traditions, and unseating consensus. It supposes that each of these capacities....is sufficiently robust as to make it possible for individuals to revise the ends that they inherit from tradition .....liberalism asserts that while individuals are social beings they are not for all that mere social products. Persons are social yet separate beings”. (Fairfield 2000, p129).

As Kymlicka summarises it –

“What is central to the liberal view is not that we can perceive a self prior to its ends, but that we understand ourselves to be prior to our ends, in the sense



that no goal or end is exempt from possible re-examination” (Kymlicka 1989, p52).

In effect, the fact that something can be freely chosen, and then subsequently re-examined and revised or rejected, is what constitutes autonomy. But that choices are *revisable* does not necessarily *prove* the presence of autonomy. The fact that a deliberated upon and endorsed first choice is then revised, and replaced by a more experienced and deliberated upon / endorsed second choice says something about learning from mistakes and the freedom to deliberate and choose, but guarantees nothing about the autonomy of either choice – perhaps both choices were heteronomous, and both also mistaken.

This model of liberal autonomy does *not* say that a person can define herself in a way that is separate from all relations and connections, or that social structures and cultures do not influence or construct her life plan and values. But it does require that no element in that construction is beyond review, and what is taken as ‘given’ will vary between individuals, and can change within one individual’s life. The issue is whether an individual can question and replace what is in ‘the given’, or whether the given has to be set for us by the community’s values.

It is this sense of choosing that Kymlicka seems to have in mind when he says that liberals should be interested in the nature of cultural structures because –

“it’s only through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware of the options available to them, and intelligently examine their value”. (Kymlicka 1989 p165).

Freedom of choice is needed precisely to find out what is valuable in life – to form, examine, and revise our beliefs about value. Liberty helps us to come to know our good, to ‘track bestness’ as Nozick puts it.

Here the role of culture is to make people aware of options, to tentatively suggest ends, so that they can use their deliberative powers to arrive at their beliefs about value. But in practice we deliberate about our ends, and revise them, on the basis of other beliefs that we hold, other beliefs about value and about the social world in

which we live, and the amount of critical reflection we can carry out puts limits on our reflection. Many, if not most, of the beliefs that enter into our deliberations have simply been uncritically adopted from our culture, which also in turn provides us with the background beliefs on which our deliberation depends. Just as I invariably do not choose the beliefs about 'facts' that I acquire from the natural world, then similarly it is misleading to say that I choose the beliefs that I acquire from the cultural world. Because they are background beliefs, because they seem natural to us, we rarely have reason to call them into question ; we have no motivation to query or test them. And herein lies the power that culture exercises over us : the beliefs that we acquire from our culture exercise this power precisely because they are not chosen.

## **THE ENDORSEMENT PROBLEM.**

For the liberal anti-perfectionist, the core task of the endorsement constraint is to make the individual's opinion authoritative over her conception of the good – it is supposed to rule out the possibility of coercive state, or any other, paternalism. But this is not enough to ensure personal autonomy, because preferences and beliefs that are endorsed may nevertheless be mistaken. Or they may be 'adaptive preferences' - either an adjustment to what can realistically be achieved in the circumstances ; or blocked preferences that are now rejected as probably not worth seeking anyway. Self-determination will aim to avoid such mistaken and irrational preferences by developing and satisfying ones which are based on full information and correct judgements. But how do we know what preferences people would have if they were informed and rational ? How do we know when a desire is an authentic expression of the person's good, as opposed to an adaptive preference ?

Elster suggests that liberalism –

“totally neglects the endogeneity of preferences. Liberalism advocates the free choice of life style, but it forgets that the choice is to a large extent pre-empted by the social environment in which people grow up and live. These endogenously emerging preferences can well lead to choices whose ultimate outcome is avoidable ruin or misery”. (Elster, 1986, p98).

It is easy to see that endorsement may be manufactured, and too weak to serve the purpose intended - we have no good reason to believe that a person's judgement need be authoritative over the genuineness of her endorsement. As Dworkin comments –

“endorsement must be genuine, and it is not genuine when someone is hypnotised or brainwashed or frightened into conversion. Endorsement is genuine only when it is itself the agent's performance, not the result of another person's thoughts being piped into his brain.....We must distinguish acceptable from unacceptable circumstances of endorsement....We would not improve someone's life, even though he endorsed the change we brought about, if the mechanisms we used to secure the change lessened his ability to consider the critical merits of the change in a reflective way”. (Dworkin 1989, p486).

Thus, the endorsement constraint gives us an argument against coercion, but it is not the only condition on people forming a conception of the good. We must also have one or more constraints on endorsement itself which will ensure that the endorsement is genuine. As Kernohan puts it –

“the genuineness or authenticity constraint must be satisfied as well. We might be able to satisfy authenticity by adding to the absence of coercion constraint something like the absence of a deception constraint”. (Kernohan 1998 p32).

Kernohan suggests that what we really need is a ‘knowledge constraint’. Critical reflection is important because it allows us to come to know our good. In the best life, forming a conception of the good is simply coming to know what is best for us and then being able to implement it. Factors which prevent us achieving the required knowledge can harm our most fundamental interests.

Similarly, Sumner argues that any endorsement or affirmation of one's life must be *informed* –

“Where someone is deceived or deluded about her circumstances, in sectors of her life which clearly matter to her, the question is whether the affirmation she professes is genuine or authentic. In order for a subject's endorsement of her life to accurately reflect her own priorities, her own point of view – in order for it to be truly hers – it must be authentic, which in turn requires that it be informed”. (Sumner 1999 p160)

The endorsement constraint leads into *authenticity* as the litmus test and guarantor of personal autonomy. Feinberg for example uses the two interchangeably. Gerald Dworkin characterises the two conditions for personal autonomy as - (i) *authenticity*

– the condition that one *identify* with one's beliefs, desires, and values after a process of critical reflection, and (ii) *procedural independence* - this identification must not be 'influenced in ways which make the process of identification in some way alien to the individual'. (G.Dworkin, 1989, p61). Christman describes personal autonomy as –

“the capacity to be one's own person, to be directed by reasons, motives, conditions, and characteristics that are not simply imposed and the product of manipulative or distorting external forces, but are a part of what can somehow be considered one's authentic self..... a conception of the person able to act, reflect, and choose on the basis of factors that are somehow her own (authentic in some sense)”. (Christman 2003 p1-2.)

As noted at the beginning of this Chapter there is a tendency in the literature to conflate and erode the meaning of what might be linked concepts, and the blurring of autonomy and authenticity here is such an example. In this usage 'authenticity' tends to be used descriptively to clarify and flesh out the meaning of autonomy and thereby seems to be absorbed within the notion of autonomy itself. In some respects this is a helpful clarification, but it also invariably ignores or glosses over a deeper sense of authenticity that is tied to both ethical autonomy and self-realization, and we return to this matter in Chapters 4 and 5.

All such versions of autonomy make it dependent on two conditions : the authenticity condition - the independence of one's deliberation and choice from manipulation by others, the capacity to reflect upon and endorse / identify with one's desires and values, so that one is not *alienated* from aspects of oneself. etc ; and the competency condition – the capacity to rule oneself, via rational thought, self-control, freedom from systematic self-deception, etc. The meaning of authenticity here seems to be the capacity to ensure that one's desires and values are in some sense one's own - to reflect upon and identify with one's motives, desires, and values, believe they make sense in terms of long-term commitments and plans, and can thereby endorse them – a reflective self-endorsement.

But how well informed must someone be in order for her endorsement to be authentic – when is more information relevant ? If there is no authoritative public standard then the answer must be whenever it would make a difference to the individual's response to her life given her own deepest priorities. Where someone's



endorsement of his life is uninformed, misinformed, or disinformed this gives us a reason for doubting its authority. But there is a more fundamental reason for doubting the authority of self-assessed endorsement, and this is the malleability of personal preferences which are –

“too sensitive to such extraneous factors as social conditioning.....the extent to which people endorse the conditions of their lives will depend on their expectations for themselves, which are notoriously subject to external manipulation through mechanisms of conditioning, indoctrination, or socialization.....The insidious aspect of social conditioning is precisely that the more thorough it is the less its victims are able to discern its influence on their judgements about their lives”. (Sumner p161-3).

In such cases the problem is not that the endorsed values of people are objectively mistaken, but that they have never had the opportunity to form their own values at all. What they lack is autonomy.

Christman looks to the process by which values and goals were adopted in the first place -

“what is crucial in the determination of the autonomy of a desire is the manner in which the desire was formed – the conditions and factors that were relevant during the (perhaps lengthy) process of coming to have the value or desire....the central focus for autonomy must make particular reference to the processes of preference formation, in particular what makes them ‘manipulative’ in a way crucially different from ‘normal’ processes of self-development” (Christman 2003 p4).

But this historical approach needs some means of distinguishing between ‘manipulative’ and ‘normal’ processes of desires or values formation. Presumably, a socialization process has been manipulative when it compromises or fails to respect the autonomy of the subject by denying him the opportunity for critical reflection on the process itself and its outcomes. So an autonomy preserving socialization process will be one which does not erode the individual’s capacity for critical assessment of his values, including the very values promoted by that process itself.

For both the deliberative / endorsement and historical approaches to autonomy the conclusion would seem to be the same : self-assessed autonomy can be doubted when there is good reason to suspect that it has been influenced by autonomy subverting mechanisms of social conditioning, such as indoctrination, programming,



brainwashing, role scripting, and the like. But it is precisely such processes that are hidden from us by our culture simply because they are culturally defined. As suggested earlier, this is the power that culture exercises over us : the beliefs we acquire from our culture exercise a power precisely because they are not chosen. And the danger of the liberal, voluntarist, model is its complicity in hiding the power that culture exercises over us. It is always at risk of presenting the process of belief enculturation as something that is within the control and choice of the individual and for which the individual must take responsibility. This is what Galbraith calls 'conditioned power' –

“Conditioned power ...is exercised by changing belief. Persuasion, education, or the social commitment to what seems natural, proper, or right causes the individual to submit to the will of another or others. The submission reflects the preferred course ; the fact of submission is not recognized. Conditioned power....is central ...to the functioning of the modern economy and polity”. (Galbraith 1983 pp5-6).

Because it seems 'natural' such implicit conditioning becomes immune to the type of critical reflection that might allow people to evade it ; it affects not only the outcome of a person's choices but also the process of deliberative choice itself. For Galbraith, individuals or groups can exercise power over others through, or because of, the implicit conditioning of those others by the culture – thus a sexist culture enables men to exercise power over women and limit their autonomy.

### **Interim Conclusion on Self Determination.**

First, the above discussion raises issue related to the perfectionism/anti-perfectionism debate. In response to some of the difficulties with endorsement, the preferred route might be to embrace a position which combines subjective and objective components. If the standard which people use to endorse their lives is a problem then a remedy is to stipulate what such standards should be. This would combine subjective endorsement with some standard of what is independently valuable. In effect this is what mainstream liberal-egalitarianism does in its theory of the *Right and the Good*, in which autonomous and subjectively endorsed conceptions of the Good must respect an objective standard of the Right or Justice that is established

and maintained by the State. But this then has implications for the supposed distinction between *perfectionism* and *anti-perfectionism*.

Secondly, there are two different senses of self-determination. As mentioned previously, the concepts of self-determination and autonomy tend to be used interchangeably by theorists, but this leads to some confusing conflation and eroding of the possible differences between the two. For theorists of individuality self-determination seems to be an issue of power and control – power over one’s own life in its widest sense, ‘*self-activity and self-creation*’. But this then combines with ‘*self-realization*’, the development of one’s capacities and potentials, as some driving force of one’s self-realization. In contrast, for liberal individualism, self-determination is about autonomy in the sense of ‘*rational self-direction*’ – the ‘*revisability thesis*’ and ‘*endorsement*’. The latter senses of it are included in the first sense, but not vice versa. So it might be that ‘self-determination’ should be used to describe the full sense of the concept, and autonomy used to describe ‘*rational self-direction*’, etc, as a component feature of self-determination but not its only feature. This issue is indirectly touched on in the following section, and developed in Chapters 4 and 5. But first we need to look at an entirely different, and third, version of autonomy.

## **ANTI-PERFECTIONISM : AUTONOMY AS AGENCY.**

We saw earlier that Johnston distinguishes three types of autonomy : *agency*, *moral autonomy*, and *personal autonomy* (Johnston 1994, pp 71-5). Moral autonomy was discussed in Chapter 2. He describes the difference between *agency* and *personal autonomy* as follows -

“An agent is a being who is capable of conceiving and striving to realize projects and values. A person who is (personally) autonomous, though, actively chooses the projects and values he wishes to pursue.....As a matter of necessity, individuals base most of their values and ambitions on the values and ambitions that they see others adopt. The difference between a person who has achieved personal autonomy and one who has not is that the (personally) autonomous individual subjects those values and projects to

critical appraisal and fashions them into a relatively consistent and coherent whole". (Johnston 1994 : p75).

There are problems with Johnston's way of formulating this distinction. Personal autonomy needs a stronger sense of being in control of one's life than Johnston conveys here. Similarly, agency must include some capacity to deliberate upon and then revise the given, and this requires at least some minimum capacity to stand apart from current ends and question them.

Clearly, what I have described in the previous pages is, in Johnston's terms, 'personal autonomy' rather than agency, and it would also be labelled – by its critics – a '*perfectionist*' principle. In contrast, Johnston's '*agency*' is an altogether different sense of autonomy, looser and less demanding, more difficult to distinguish from negative liberty and effective freedom, and it underlies what is essentially a traditional liberal view which, in more recent times, has come to be associated with liberal *anti-perfectionism*. (Mulhall and Swift 1992; Swift 2001; Sher 1997; Neal 1997). My interest here is not the perfectionism / anti-perfectionism dispute in itself but its relevance to different interpretations of the relation between autonomy and inviolability.

'Perfectionism' (see also Chapter 5) is the idea that it is possible to formulate a conception of the good life for all humans, an objective standard that is good for its own sake and for everyone, even though this objective standard may not at present be subjectively endorsed by most people. The goodness of a life then depends on how closely it approximates this conception. Individuality and perfectionist liberalism are both perfectionist in that they rest on the claim that there are universal objective values for people, but they are 'liberal' in that one of their core objective values is autonomy. In contrast, liberal theories claim that they do not try to encourage any particular way of life, but leave individuals free to use their resources in *whatever ways they themselves find most valuable*, regardless of whether these are autonomous or heteronomous.

Both 'perfectionism' and 'anti-perfectionism' would agree that if a certain ideal of the person – self determination – lies at the heart of autonomy then there is something important about each individual making evaluations of this kind for his

own life. But for the anti-perfectionist this *in itself* is of a greater order of moral importance than is the moral worth of the specific evaluations he in fact actually makes in practice. This is because *imposing* a particular conception of the good on people offends their dignity, does not treat them with respect. Central to the liberal understanding of the good life is that lives have value only if they are embraced 'from the inside' – endorsed autonomously by the persons living those lives. *The State* should therefore be neutral in relation to individual conceptions of the good. Respect for persons requires respect for each person's autonomy. Since the exercise of autonomy may lead to the acceptance of a wide diversity of conceptions of the good, including non-autonomous ones, then respect for each person's autonomy requires the state to be neutral between different views of the good life. Thus, the argument of Chapter 2 : the anti-perfectionist liberal uses '*autonomy*' to describe the inviolability of a private sphere of thought and action, a private sphere of conduct insulated from public / State interference, an area within which citizens are 'self-owning' and free to think and act as they wish.

But there are difficulties with this –

(1) as discussed in Chapter 2, if we respect individuals preferences within their private sphere in this way then we cannot claim to be basing our theory on the inviolability or intrinsic value of individuals. Rather, we attempt to maximize that which is of value to individuals.

(2) as we have seen, there is no guarantee that deliberated upon, revised, or endorsed preferences are in fact autonomous.

(3) the threat to individual endorsement / dignity is typically viewed by the anti-perfectionist as being the State, rather than society and culture. But any political system that seeks to have as little input as possible in people's preferences, or their characters, will not thereby be *neutral* regarding these, but will implicitly sanction whatever mainstream conceptions of the good, or types of character, are imparted to



people by their culture : individual preferences, notions of good and harm, and the types of character linked to these, will be culturally defined.

In contrast, for the liberal, anarchist, or socialist perfectionist it matters that people live autonomously. But it also matters that the lives they autonomously choose and endorse are endowed with value, valuable in their own right, respecting the inviolability of themselves and others. Choice is necessary for individual well-being, but not sufficient : it matters also that people make good choices; good choices should be promoted, while less worthy ones should be discouraged; and if a democratic society and State can help, but not force, people to choose well then that is a justification for its doing so. In so far as personal autonomy is the perfectionist value then this should be fostered as appropriate by cultural and State action. The perfectionist view values autonomy in its full sense as a conception of the good, as a way of life, and is a sort of 'positive liberty'/ own master/self-defining sense of autonomy, which all should respect and which a democratic State may facilitate.

In contrast anti-perfectionists use autonomy in a narrower and optional sense, to describe a situation in which individuals choose, or are deemed to have chosen, and are under no pressure not to have chosen, their own conception of the good, in accordance with their own preferences, which may or may not be autonomous, and facilitated in all this by the State, but without any *State* paternalism. In other words, a sort of negative liberty-non-interference-toleration version of autonomy, in which autonomy is *necessarily* optional. Liberal-egalitarianism's only amendment to this would be an enhanced emphasis on effective liberty and an enabling state.

Thus, mainstream liberal theory uses 'autonomy' to describe what Johnston characterises as *agency and moral autonomy*, and it is in terms of these that most adults are deemed 'autonomous' and, therefore, morally and legally responsible, politically equal, and deserving of respect. These senses of basic agency and moral autonomy seem to correspond to the two features of Rawls's moral person (Rawls 1972 : p505) : firstly, they are capable of having a conception of the good – plans, projects, and values they wish to pursue ; secondly, they are capable of having a sense of justice – of recognizing that other individuals are agents who have claims



that deserve to be recognized and respected and that this may place limits on one's own other-regarding actions. The later Rawls suggested that the idea that we can form and revise our conception of the good only applies to certain limited *political* questions rather than being *comprehensive* – it is adopted solely for the purpose of determining our public rights and responsibilities, and need not apply to our private lives or personal identity. He insists that liberal autonomy is not intended as a general account of the relationship between the self and its ends applicable to all areas of life. In the private sphere it is entirely possible that some people's personal identity will be bound to particular ends in such a way as to preclude rational revision. (Rawls 1985, p241; Kymlicka 2002, p235). Furthermore, we saw earlier that equating autonomy with '*revisability*' is anyway questionable.

Much of the perfectionism/anti-perfectionism debate has focussed on autonomy in relation to *State perfectionism/anti-perfectionism*. This reflects the typically liberal preoccupation with State power. But, in theory, there might be at least three forms of perfectionism and anti-perfectionism –

**Individual perfectionism** / anti-perfectionism : the 'perfectionist' claim that self-determination / ethical autonomy is a universal objective value which makes some ways of life and some types of character better than others, but that the pursuit of these is an individual quest, an ethical vocation, to be pursued autonomously by each individual.

**State perfectionism** / anti-perfectionism : as above but, additionally, that the 'better' ways of life and character should be encouraged, and the worse be penalised, by State action.

**Social perfectionism** / anti-perfectionism : as above, but emphasis would be on the role of society and culture in enabling the better, and constraining the worse, ways of life.

Individuality would consistently support individual perfectionism in the forms of ethical and moral autonomy ; it could be open-minded about the other two forms, but would see the 'social' as more fundamental than the State in enabling or constraining individual autonomy; but when the 'social' does constrain autonomy

then an enabling State could be favoured as a counter-balance. 'Mainstream liberalism' would favour individual perfectionism but see it as optional, to be left to individual choice; instead, it would consistently support agency and moral autonomy ; but it would claim to be anti-perfectionist on both the State and the social. The next section examines this claim.

There are problems with the notions of perfectionism and anti-perfectionism, not least the terms themselves, but this debate can be postponed to a later Chapter because our concern here is more specific.

## **THE RIGHT AND THE GOOD.**

The perfectionism / anti-perfectionism debate seems to hinge on (a) whether there is an objective standard of the good, and (b) what the route to practising this good should be. Both individuality and liberal individualism agree on (a), that autonomy is such an objective good and that it derives from individual inviolability ; but they disagree about (b), the route to it, and this then affects their conception of autonomy. They disagree about (b) because they interpret the implications of inviolability in different ways. As indicated earlier, both 'perfectionism' and 'anti-perfectionism' would agree that if a certain ideal of the person – self determination – lies at the heart of inviolability then there is something important about each individual making evaluations of this kind for his own life. But for the anti-perfectionist this *in itself* is of a greater order of moral importance than is the moral worth of the specific evaluations he in fact actually makes in practice. This is because *imposing* a particular conception of the good on people offends their dignity, does not treat them with respect. Central to the liberal understanding of the good life is that lives have value only if they are embraced 'from the inside' – endorsed autonomously by the persons living those lives.

Thus, for liberal individualism, inviolability entails that ones own conception of the good must respect the inviolability of others – moral autonomy - but not necessarily of oneself ; within the 'private sphere' individuals are 'self-owning' agents, free to think and act as they wish, to pursue their own subjective preferences and conceptions of the good, insulated from social or State interference. Consequently,

individualism is not perfectionist, and uses 'autonomy' to describe agency and moral autonomy. In contrast, for individuality, inviolability entails that one's own conception of the good must respect those characteristics that constitute *one's own* inviolability as well as that of others; individuals have duties towards themselves and this leads to the notion of *ethical autonomy* as a basis for *moral autonomy*. Consequently, individuality supports personal autonomy and is an example of '*individual perfectionism*'.

But in practice the liberal position is more complex, and the balance between subjective and objective components varies between varieties of liberalism. As noted earlier, if the standard which people use to endorse their lives, and of autonomy, is a problem then a remedy is to stipulate what such standards should be. This would combine subjective endorsement with some standard of what is independently valuable. In liberal-egalitarianism's theory of the Right and the Good, autonomous and subjectively endorsed conceptions of the Good must respect an objective standard of the Right or Justice that is established and maintained by the State. This produces an interesting hybrid model that seems to look in both liberal perfectionist and anti-perfectionist directions.

In general liberals have not taken a stand on the truth or falsity of a person's beliefs about what constitutes the good life. Liberals have typically been non-cognitivists about the good and have seen judgements of value as expressions of preference (Kernohan 1998, p37). That is the point of the liberal commitment to tolerance and the neutrality of the state. They believe that it is better for a person to work out her own mistakes. However egalitarian liberals *are* committed to the equal moral worth of persons - to a strong version of moral equality. On the one hand, they think that people should be responsible for the choices they make - so it is fair that how well a person's life goes should reflect the decisions he has made. On the other hand, they think it is unfair that how a person's life goes should reflect factors for which he is not responsible. So he does not deserve any less chance of a good life because of factors which are arbitrary from a moral point of view, factors such as his race, gender, natural abilities, or sexual orientation. For egalitarian liberals this commitment to the moral equality of persons is conceptually prior to their commitment to tolerance and state neutrality. Tolerance and neutrality are an

interpretation of moral equality. The three together form the basis of the egalitarian liberal conception of the *Right*. As Kymlicka comments –

“liberal-egalitarianism is a deeply moral theory, premised on fundamental principles of the intrinsic moral worth of individuals, racial and gender equality, justice as fairness, equality of opportunity, individual rights and responsibilities, and so on. Liberal egalitarianism is not only committed to these principles, but also seeks to use state power to uphold and enforce them, and to prohibit any actions or practices which violate them”. (Kymlicka 2002, p217).

Consequently, Rawls argues that certain rights and liberties are so fundamental that the general welfare cannot override them –

“Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override .... the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests”. (Rawls 1971 pp 3-4).

The role of the State is to enforce a principle of the *Right*, to provide a fair distribution of rights, resources, and opportunities to enable people to pursue their own individual conceptions of the good. The *Right* is a sort of ‘meta-theory’ of the good, bordering on a *perfectionist* principle, rather than being seen as a particular conception of the good. As Sher puts it –

‘while conceptions (of the good) are taken to include religious doctrines, ideals of character and virtue, aesthetic and cultural values, and norms of sexual behaviour, they are not understood to include claims about health, economic prosperity, security, freedom, equality, or social justice .... Virtually everyone agrees that health, freedom, and safety are good things....people are obviously better off when they are healthy, prosperous, and secure ....while there is no similar consensus about the value of (say) chastity, salvation, or communal solidarity”. (Sher 1997 p 38).

Those things that ‘everyone agrees’ are fundamental to everyone’s good, but which are nevertheless subject to diverse and conflicting interests and beliefs, are subject to the *Right* and possible State intervention. Those things that are not fundamental to *everyone’s* good, and are *controversial but specific conceptions of the good*, of great importance to particular individuals or groups, are a part of the Good and exempt from State intervention .... on condition that they respect the *Right*.

What underlies the Right, and determines what sorts of things are so important that they must be distributed fairly, is what Rawls calls 'primary goods' – the "things that every rational man is presumed to want". Rawls says that the proper conception of primary goods –

“depends on a moral conception of a person that embodies a certain ideal....their capacity of a sense of justice and their capacity of a conception of the good ....primary goods are now characterised as what persons need in their status as free and equal citizens....these goods are seen as answering to their needs as citizens as opposed to their preferences and desires” (Rawls 1999, pxii-xiii).

This seems to imply that the purpose of the State is to allot to citizens what they need, rather than what they may actually want or desire, and seems thereby to be a partially *perfectionist* claim resting on some implicit conception of the *general* human good (the Right). The human good, according to Rawls, is to develop ones *own* life plan, in conformity with ones *own* individual and reasonable conception of the human good. Primary goods are those things that are of value to all citizens in determining their particular conceptions of the human good and in developing and following life plans that they have formulated to advance these. The chief primary goods are rights, liberties, opportunities, income and wealth, and self-respect or self-esteem. The latter sense of ones own worth is necessary to motivate the development of ones conception of the good and life plan. But this claim, that the Right promotes those generic conditions that will best enable individuals to pursue their own conception of the good, is controversial and attacked from the libertarian right and the socialist left. But it is anyway not clear what a neutral and purely procedural standard of these conditions might be, and Rawls's own 'justice as fairness' is open to widely divergent interpretations. The 'endowment insensitive' basis of Rawls's principles of justice is potentially entirely radical, but the principles themselves lack concrete substance and so can be used to justify whatever the prevailing cultural practices and norms happen to be.

Furthermore, although Rawls is no Hobbessian egoist and is concerned with moral autonomy, the individuals in his 'original situation' are fundamentally concerned with maximising their own share of the goods which might be on offer. In that sense



they are necessarily all in competition with each other for such shares and are primarily concerned with their own individual self-interest.

Similarly, one of the significant blind-spots of liberalism in general is their bias to systems of economic *distribution* rather than *production*. People's preferences, their opinions about the sort of lives they want, seem likely to be as much a function of systems of production as they are of patterns of distribution. As Patrick Neal comments –

“Whether or not a scheme of distribution is fair is not the whole of justice; one can also raise the prior question of whether the means used to generate the resources to be distributed ..... the system of production and productive relations, is fair.....A moments reflection suggests that what people do, and not simply what they get, is a relevant consideration in any discussion of justice”. (Neal 1997, p22).

What many people *do*, and their ability to realize their conception of the good, is powerfully influenced by capitalist systems of economic production and the issues of efficiency, profit, funding, and ‘managerialism’, etc, that arise within it. The market is both a mechanism of distribution and a way of organizing production, a particular way of relating individuals to one another as they engage in one of the central activities of their common life. A social structure based upon market relations leads to the development of particular types of individual character and particular types of individual preferences and desires. So any assessment of the market must be not only in terms of how well it satisfies given preferences, but also in terms of *what preferences* it generates and *what types of character* it fosters. But this is not the focus, and the concern seems generally to be upon patterns of distribution. Given the historical and contemporary relationship between liberalism and capitalism it would be reasonable to assume that such an economic system is a fundamental and taken for granted feature of the liberal conception of the Right – certainly it is typically taken as a given. However, Dworkin suggests that a commitment to economic growth and to capitalist economic relations - positions generally thought to be *constitutive* of liberalism - are in fact *derivative* liberal positions, not central to liberalism. He nevertheless concedes that in practice liberalism has endorsed capitalism and economic growth as the best route to enabling people to pursue their own conceptions of the good, and his own focus remains on patterns of distribution,

to the neglect of production. (Dworkin 1978; Neal 1977, p15). We return to this issue in Chapter 6.

Rawls regards the Right, and his principles of distributive justice, as *non-perfectionist* because they do not depend upon a concrete or comprehensive conception of the good that is to be applied to all regardless of whether they individually subscribe to it. But it nevertheless appears to be at least weakly perfectionist in so far as it imposes on citizens the idea that they have a moral right to develop their own reasonable conception of the good, claims to allot resources and opportunities to enable this, imposes moral obligations to respect others, and in practice takes as a given a capitalist system of economic production and distribution as the best available means to achieve its wider ends.

However, the Right is also regarded as non-perfectionist because it is viewed as being based on an 'overlapping consensus' derived from amongst those with divergent, but 'reasonable', conceptions of the Good. And such a *consensus counts as legitimate only when achieved under conditions of free and authentic affirmation of shared principles that have been reflectively endorsed with adequate information and a range of options*. Social conditions that hamper the equal capacity to do this, such as poverty, injustice and inequality, disability, etc, mean that consensus, justice, and legitimacy, and therefore the Right, are all flawed. But, as previously seen, the danger is that the standard of such endorsement and authenticity is simply the prevailing and evolving cultural practices which reflect the balance of power between different groups in society.

Crucially, balancing the perfectionist leaning Right is said to be the anti-perfectionist leaning Good. Ultimately, the Right is said to be 'neutral' and 'procedural'— it does not depend on any particular and substantive conception of the good, does not presuppose the superiority of one way of life over others, and the State which enforces it is a 'neutral State'. Our essential interests are harmed by attempts to enforce a particular view of the good life on people, and so the State should remain neutral regarding the good life. The State tells people what is rightfully theirs, and what rightfully belongs to others, and insists *that people adjust their own particular*

*conceptions of the good to respect the rightful claims of others. Thus the principles of right, and so of justice, put limits on reasonable conceptions of ones good, and aspirations and plans must take these constraints into account. Desires, aspirations, and ones autonomy are restricted from the start by the principles of justice, whose boundaries all individuals must respect.* Thus, in Rawls' justice as fairness, the concept of Right establishes an objective standard for autonomous agency that is prior to that of individual conceptions of the Good. As Rawls puts it –

“certain initial bounds are placed upon what is good and what forms of character are morally worthy, and so upon what kinds of persons men should be”. ( Sandel 1984 p 42).

This begins to bear some resemblance to what was described above as ‘ethical autonomy’. But these ‘bounds’ are ‘*other-regarding*’ ones, they refer to conceptions of the good and forms of character as these affect the person’s interactions and relations with others - an issue of *toleration* and *moral autonomy*. As suggested above the autonomy / toleration distinction is often blurred in liberalism. Rawls suggested that autonomy, or the idea that we can form and revise our conception of the good, only applies to certain limited *political* questions – adopted solely for the purpose of determining our public rights and responsibilities, and need not apply to our private lives or personal identity. He insists that liberal autonomy is not intended as a general account of the relationship between the self and its ends applicable to all areas of life. This Rawlsian ‘political liberalism’ contrasts with the ‘comprehensive liberalism’ of J.S.Mill. And, in this, Rawls and liberal-egalitarianism do seem clearly anti-perfectionist.

For liberals, a society that acknowledges individuals rights to act as they wish within their personal spheres of conduct automatically acknowledges their dignity and special value. Thus, the typical liberal position rejects paternalism and believes that the State ought to be neutral with respect to the individual’s private, ‘self-regarding’, sphere of action. The State must recognize a private sphere within which individuals are free to think and act as they wish – self-ownership requires that individuals have the final authority over decisions that concern themselves alone. The liberal conceptualisation of the good makes no distinction between good and bad

conceptions of the good – the good which I define and pursue may encompass any and all ends, except those which deny similar liberty to others. The language of the good is assimilated to the language of preferences.

Thus, as indicated in the discussion earlier and in the previous Chapter, the **core liberal model**, endorsed by both libertarians and egalitarians alike, is roughly as suggested in the box below –

Inviolability - liberty - self - ownership	-	private - autonomy - sphere	-	conception of good
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This liberal core will then be surrounded by a wider egalitarian or libertarian framework, as below –

<i>Egalitarian</i> - Justice - the Right constrains pursuit of good	-	welfare and civil liberties	-	mixed economy	-	neutral and enabling state
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<i>Libertarians</i> - Justice - Rights - property rights and civil liberties	-	market economy	-	neutral and minimal state.
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Despite fundamental differences between utilitarian, libertarian, or egalitarian liberals they nevertheless share in common this core liberal model

But, as we saw previously, this liberal core creates a problem for liberals : *the inviolability of the individual which underlies the 'Right' is not compatible with the inviolability of a private sphere of thought and action that underlies the notion of the 'Good'*. If we respect individuals preferences within their private sphere in this way then we cannot claim to be basing our theory on the intrinsic value *of* individuals. Rather, we attempt to maximize that which is of value *to* individuals. Comprehensive self-ownership allows individuals to veto self-regarding responsibilities, so that any general duty to respect individual inviolability is optional - what is of value *to* individuals is greater than the independent value of any morally privileged capacity that confers inviolability. The inviolability of the individual entails both other-regarding and self-regarding duties. The latter consist not simply of respecting others via the Right, which is the liberal anti-perfectionist view, but also of *respecting ones*



*own inviolability*, and this puts limits on ones self-regarding actions - ones own conception of the good must respect the inviolability of oneself and not just that of others. The implication was also that the 'self-regarding' and 'other-regarding' are interdependent rather than separate – i.e. if one does not respect ones own inviolability then this will affect ones respect for the inviolability of others.

## **CONCLUSION : PROBLEMS ARISING FOR LIBERALISM.**

There are a number of issues for liberalism arising from all the above, and it is perhaps best to itemise these separately –

(1) The liberal sense of individual, as opposed to inter-personal, inviolability seems formal and undeveloped. There are no *obligatory* 'self-regarding' duties arising from inviolability : the latter places no limits on ones behaviour towards *oneself* or on ones conception of the good. In the 'private sphere' the individual is 'self-owning'. Inviolability is optional. Self-determination is optional. A sense of ethical autonomy is absent. Consequently, the private sphere is characterised by an 'ethical or moral minimalism' and, in turn, this is seen as being unrelated to the 'other-regarding'.

(2) The liberal notion of autonomy is inevitably, given its anti-perfectionism, a specific and restricted one, being used to describe the choice of ones own conception of the good plus moral autonomy, and includes some capacity to stand apart from, deliberate upon, and then revise current ends. However important these are as expressions of freedom, they are limited as a conception of autonomy.

(3) There is no clear and objective standard of the 'good', and therefore no distinction between good or bad conceptions of the good – all are seen as similarly valid individual preferences entitled to toleration, and this will have repercussions for conceptions of harm.

(4) It is not clear where individual preferences and conceptions of the good are supposed to emanate from. State neutrality on this issue valorises neutrality, so



presumably such neutrality should apply in principle to any powerful institutional influences on preference formation, e.g. the media, advertising, employers, culture in general. Certainly, any political system that seeks to have as little input as possible in people's preferences, or their characters, will not thereby be *neutral* regarding these, but will implicitly sanction whatever mainstream conceptions of the good, or types of character, are imparted to people by their culture : individual preferences, notions of good and harm, and the types of character linked to these, will be culturally defined. These cultural standards will then be a key influence in shaping the content of the Right.

(5) As if to balance all the above, the emphasis in liberalism is on the 'other-regarding' sphere – the concern for toleration and moral autonomy. But there are two possible problems -

(a) if respect for inviolability is not developed and practised in relation to oneself then the basis for having a conception of it, and for practising it in relation to others, seems likely to be fragile.

(b) the initiative for, and commitment to, moral autonomy and toleration will often be external to the self rather than necessarily self-determined, and therefore based on compliance rather than consent.

So there will be an ongoing tension, or uneasy truce, between the self-regarding self-interest and 'moral minimalism' of the private sphere on the one hand, and the expected moral autonomy of the other-regarding sphere on the other.

(6) The 'Right' in general, or elements of it, will always be at risk of seeming to be external and imposed - State-led, rather than 'led from the inside' and self-determined.

(7) There is no objective or substantive standard of the 'Right', simply certain principles and procedures open to interpretation and therefore subject to whatever the current and evolving cultural practices and norms happen to be. The distinction between the Right and the Good implies that the liberal conception of justice can be specified and justified without crucial reference to controversial conceptions of value and moral principles – that the Right is entirely procedural and consensual. The

Right claims to promote those generic conditions that will best enable individuals to pursue their own conception of the good. But it is not clear what a *neutral* and purely *procedural* standard of these conditions might be. One such generic condition is a capitalist system of economic production, but it is not clear in what sense this is a neutral or procedural, rather than a substantive, standard ; nor is it necessarily self-evident that this is the best way to enable the pursuit of the good, unless the good is defined in terms of capitalist practices and values.

(8) If, as liberals suggest, inviolability in the self-regarding private sphere is optional, then such inviolability is also too weak to be used as an argument against State, or any other external, interference in the private sphere.

(9) A final difficulty is the sense of something missing from the liberal account of 'autonomy', that it is too mechanistic and only half the story, and that some animating spirit that is necessary to bring it to life has somehow been overlooked : that the concept of autonomy has to be tied to something else that is given to and unchosen by the self – an issue explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

Each of these areas is dealt with in subsequent Chapters. But the immediate issue is in what sense self-determination, autonomy, and agency are possible – the subject of the next Chapter.



## CHAPTER 4 THE POSSIBILITY OF AUTONOMY.

That humans do not exist in general, but are individual personalities characterised by individual differences, is uncontested. But whilst such individual differences are central to individuality, and a basis of the claim that we are all individuals, their existence does not in itself confirm the presence of autonomy and individuality. Individuality entails that individuals are able to self develop, that there is scope or opportunity for self-determination and self-realization. *Individuality requires that autonomy is a possibility*, and moral individualism or inviolability require that we are alert to the conditions of its achievement.

It is a characteristic ability of humans that they are able to reflect upon and adopt attitudes towards their desires, intentions, life plans, and the world around them – a capacity to reflect on one's own motivational structure and make changes to it, alter one's preferences and then seek to make them effective in action. By exercising this capacity we define our nature, give meaning and coherence to our lives, and take responsibility for the kind of person we are. But to what extent we do this as autonomous or 'relatively autonomous' agents or, instead, as agents conditioned or determined by the boundaries of a largely taken-for-granted social structure and culture, has been the source of ongoing controversy within the social sciences. What we do when we act is a central question for social theory since it is here that the action's relative autonomy will be revealed. The term *agency* is usually juxtaposed to *structure* and is used as a synonym for action, emphasizing the undetermined nature of human action, as opposed to the determinism of structural theories that emphasise the role of social structure and culture in shaping human behaviour. We review these approaches later in the Chapter.

Whether or not self-determination is possible will depend upon two things –

- (1) What we mean by self-determination.
- (2) The relation between self-determination and those natural and social influences that might enable or constrain it.

Regarding the first point. In Chapters 2 and 3 we identified four forms of autonomy –

Ethical Autonomy.

Personal Autonomy.

Agency.

Moral Autonomy.

Liberal autonomy is defined in terms of agency and moral autonomy, choosing ones 'own' conception of the good based on ones 'own' preferences, the revisability thesis, and respect for others. Individuality requires 'ethical autonomy', personal autonomy, and moral autonomy, and it is tied to some conception of the development of capacities and potentials. In the final section of this Chapter we return to these and develop and clarify them further. But first we need to look at the general issue of whether autonomy is possible.

In Chapter 3 it was suggested that one of the problems of autonomy is the sense of something missing from it, that the liberal version of it is too mechanistic and only half the story, and that some animating spirit that is necessary to bring it to life has somehow been overlooked : that the concept of autonomy has to be tied to something else that is given to and unchosen by the self. Gerald Dworkin expresses the problem—

‘all individuals have a history. They develop socially and psychologically in a given environment with a set of biological endowments. They mature slowly and are therefore heavily influenced by parents, peers, and culture. How, then, can we talk of self-determination ?’ (Dworkin 1989, p58).

He nevertheless goes on to say —

‘We simply find ourselves motivated in certain ways, and the notion of choosing from ground zero makes no sense.....But (in so far as we are autonomous) we always retain the possibility of stepping back and judging where we are and where we want to be’.(Dworkin 1989 : p34)

Feinberg (1989:pp33-4) has a similar problem. He acknowledges : that rational reflection presupposes some relatively settled convictions to reason from and with; that we are ‘social animals’ and heavily subject to external social influences; but that our motivational structure is something *we just find ourselves with*. He then comments—



“If we .....call the ‘inner core self’ the I, and the rest of the comprehensive self over which it rules its Me, then we can put the dual aspect of personal autonomously felicitously : *I am autonomous if I rule me, and no one else rules I*” (Feinberg 1989: p51-2).

This is the liberal view of the ‘unencumbered self’ and the ‘revisability thesis’ – that the self is ultimately separable from all its specific commitments and ends because these are in principle revisable. This takes an autonomous life to mean : deliberation/reflection/endorsement/choice/deliberation, etc = revisability. In effect, the fact that something can be freely chosen, and subsequently rejected, is what makes it autonomous. But, as we saw in Chapter 3, such free choice and endorsement is problematic. That choices are revisable does not necessarily *prove* anything about autonomy. The fact that a deliberated upon and endorsed first choice is then revised, and replaced by a more experienced and deliberated upon / endorsed second choice says something about learning from mistakes and the freedom to deliberate and choose, but guarantees nothing about the autonomy of either choice – perhaps both choices were heteronomous, and both also mistaken. Frankfurt (1971, p10) makes a distinction between ‘first order desires’ and ‘second order desires’ (and third/fourth/fifth...etc) : desires about what I want to be or do ; and desires about whether I want to follow, modify, or reject these initial (or subsequent) desires. Frankfurt does not want to locate autonomy at the first level : this would mean that the autonomous act would be just the blind following of a desire, involving none of the discrimination/deliberation required for choice. There is clearly some simple truth in Frankfurt’s point. But no level at which we might locate deliberative choice can be demonstrated to be an area of *pure choice*. An individual’s personal autonomy has to rest upon something given to and unchosen by the self, that autonomous choice can never be a pure choice, but must be concerned to at least some minimal degree with the discovery or development and expression of one’s deepest predispositions or commitments as the basis for our choices. Without some given commitments there would be nothing from which determinate choices could be made; something substantive has to be there to make us choose X over Y. Self-creation is possible, but not ex-nihilo. Thus, free deliberation and choice are crucial, but as a means of tapping into something more substantive. The only possible candidates for the latter are something derived from the ‘*natural*’, or the ‘*social*’, or

the '*spiritual*'. These are separate, though might be regarded as overlapping, and the 'social' will anyway create particular conceptions of the 'natural' and the 'spiritual'. The focus in this thesis is the 'natural' and the 'social' and both are explored below.

## **THE NATURAL, SOCIAL, AND INDIVIDUAL.**

The initial concern here is some broad general features of the natural and the social to illustrate their interconnection and the ways in which these might constrain or enable autonomy and individuality, and there is no attempt to be comprehensive. We start with the 'natural' because that is where humans start. Rorty disagrees –

“Socialization goes all the way down, there is nothing beneath socialization or prior to history which is definatory of the human” (Rorty 1989, p xiii).

Conversely, as Sayers puts it –

“We are simultaneously both natural (biological) and social beings ....If we are social beings 'all the way down', then we are at the same time and equally, natural and biological beings all the way up”. (Sayers 1998, p153).

The focus here is purely in relation to the points raised in the Introduction and Chapter 2 about humans as 'creators and producers', that what is most distinctive about human action is not the rational / non-rational or normative, but the creativity which underlies or is inseparable from both (see for example Joas 1996, and Mouzelis 1998).

### **1. Species Powers and Capacities.**

The focus here is a specific one, a general ontological claim of the individuality tradition touched on in the Introduction and Chapter 2 : humans as 'doers and creators', as developers, enjoyers, and exerts of their uniquely human attributes – a claim developed in Chapter 5. Whatever these attributes are taken to be, their exertion and development are seen as ends in themselves, a satisfaction in themselves. We discussed this in Chapter 2 as being what is characteristic of humans and the basis of their *inviolability*. Humans create, shape, and transform rather than simply react passively to concrete social and environmental conditions. Thus, the

individual is a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted , one who is moved by his own conscious purposes. For MacPherson (1973, p5), the *liberal* progenitors of this approach were J.S.Mill and Green, though a prior debt is owed to a range of theorists and particularly to both Marx and Aristotle. But this ontology remains open-ended in that the purposes which move humans are multifarious rather than pre-determined by ontologically fixed traits, so that the nature of humans remains 'free'. For the existentialist there is no ontology other than an over-riding desire to posit freedom in the sense of freedom to create oneself –

“Man first of all exists....and defines himself afterward ....Man is nothing else but that which he makes himself”. (Sartre 1956, p290)

The existential self has no predetermined essence to be realized, it must determine and create itself. But while both Nietzsche and Sartre claim that 'human nature' in an ahistorical sense does not exist, both offer visions of the person which seem to transcend history. As creators and doers, humans are possessed of a substance, one which exists prior to any form they may actually invent for themselves. To posit a particular action as characteristic, regardless of how open-ended, is to make a claim of ontology.

This argument regarding creative, purposive, action, that we are doers and creators, *presupposes we are equipped with the means to do and create*. (Creaven 2000; Geras 1983; Sayers 1998; Kitching 1988; Lindsay 1996).

A. Rather than fixed instincts humans possess an ensemble of embodied species powers, capacities, and potentials – mind, intelligence, self-consciousness, intentionality, rationality, reflexivity, linguistic capacity, sociality, emotional dispositions etc. Humans emerge with qualities which differentiate us from the animal – our reason, to conceive and understand the world; our imagination through which we reach beyond the range of our senses; our awareness of ourselves as a separate entity, the ability to remember the past, to visualize the future, and to denote objects and acts by symbols. As Lichthman (1990, p15) puts it –

“the very notion of human nature as a tabula rasa is self contradictory. Even a blank slate must have such properties as will permit the acceptance of the chalk...”.

**B.** Simultaneously, humans have a range of psycho-organic needs, and an interest in ensuring those needs are met. Human needs and interests are those which ensure the physical and psychological well-being of the subject, and this is defined by cultural standards. As human powers and capacities develop so new needs emerge, and the growth of the latter is in turn the spur to the development of new powers and capacities. This development does not remain confined to purely material needs and capacities, for the growth of material needs and activities leads to the emergence and development of ‘higher’, mental and cultural, needs and abilities.

**C.** human species powers enable them to articulate these needs and interests and act consciously in accordance with them, thereby securing for themselves a potential relative autonomy from their physical and social environment and its constraints, the capacity to re-make these in accordance with their needs and interests. Only humans have ‘projects’ in any developed form, and their own individual and interpersonal reflexive powers allow them to monitor their environments, control themselves if not their environments, deliberate about which projects would realize their personal and group concerns within society and to act strategically in order to promote them. Reflexive abilities, creativity, and commitments enable humans to respond to constraints and strategically circumvent them.

**D.** one interesting aspect of all this (previously referred to in the quote from Fromm early in Chapter 2) is the way in which human self-awareness, reason, and imagination disrupt the ‘harmony’ of animal existence, makes of humans an anomaly : part of nature, subject to its physical laws and unable to change them, yet transcending the rest of nature. Human existence is thus in a state of constant and unavoidable disequilibrium, an ‘ontological insecurity’. Humans are the only animal for whom *their own existence is a problem* which they

have to solve and from which they cannot escape. This split in the nature of humans leads to what Fromm describes as existential dichotomies because they are rooted in their very existence; they are contradictions which they cannot annul but to which they can react in various ways, relative to their character and culture. Furthermore, this disharmony of human existence generates needs which far transcend those of their animal origin. Such 'ontological insecurity' has its own implications for individual autonomy, builds in to humans an existential angst that unsettles, that questions.

The theme of humans as doers and creators, equipped with *the means* to do and create, is developed further in Chapters 5 and 6 in relation to 'self-realization' and 'internal goods'. Its implication is that humans have a natural predisposition towards *agency*, but in pursuing that predisposition they simultaneously create *structures*, and the following points seek to show how the specific nature of doing and creating is then determined and conditioned by such structures.

## **2. 'Praxis' or 'Labour'.**

Creating and doing is the activity of '*labour*', a rather obvious point that follows a long tradition from Locke, Hegel, Marx, etc, to MacPherson (though '*praxis*' might be a better word). In pursuing their needs and interests via labour humans utilize and develop their powers and capacities, and are creative producers - of their livelihood and material objects, but also of ideas, of social institutions and values, of language, of systems of government, of conceptions of beauty and ugliness, truth and justice, face powder and cork tiles, nuclear weapons and racial prejudice, etc. In other words, 'labour' is more than the marketplace skills and paid work it has become in market societies. But labour is simultaneously a means of *self creation*. It is this notion of 'labour as means of self-creation' that MacPherson defends when he defines labour broadly as the "creative transformation of nature and of oneself and ones relations with ones fellows" (MacPherson 1977, p34). We could not be doers and creators if our nature was comprised of no capacity that promoted doing and creating. Thus the ontological claim of being 'doers and creators' is the embedding in the person of his



‘labour’. Our capacity to labour is a constituent part of us. This alters the conceptual picture of the person in two ways – labour is historically specific, and also social.

### **3. History.**

Recognizing ‘labour’ as an integral part of the person means that there is more to humans than ontology can account for – labour introduces something into the person whose content is historically specific so that humans must be conceived of as being both ontological and historical beings. The skills and practices that are required to create develop our needs, but these are not static. As labour practices, technology, and the product of our labour, all change then so do our needs because they shape what our skills, our labour, will be. Labour therefore becomes contingent on historically prevailing levels of technology and labour practices, and thus the person partly constituted by that labour can no longer be conceived wholly ontologically.

### **4. Social Relations.**

If labour is a historical concept it is also a social concept – for with labour necessarily come the social relations from which it is inseparable. The practice and development of labour invariably takes place in the context of social interaction, as a social activity. Thus, what the person introduces into herself via labour are social relations, because if labour is ontologically definitive then so must be the social relations from which that labour is inseparable, and in this respect the person is socially constituted. The positioning of individuals in labour and other cultural practices, social relations, and structures ensures that their social and individual conduct is subject to a range of constraints and enablements. The significance of structure is that it then comprises a social and material boundary, historically predating the interaction of human agents, which shapes their subsequent activity by immersing them in social practices, processes of enculturation, and stratified social relations which determine their respective access to material and cultural resources and opportunities. The social agency of individuals remains a mechanism of structural elaboration or reproduction, and agents still act as agents on the basis of

needs and interests, but within a range of sociocultural possibilities. But, and this is crucial, few societies will be harmoniously balanced organic wholes : tensions, conflicts, and contradictions between different structural parts of society, and between different social groups, all foster competing values and ideologies, and an ensuing pluralism and diversity.

## **5. Human Nature.**

Political theory and ideologies are notorious for their often unspoken conceptions of human nature. The obvious candidates are liberalism's human reason or 'asociality', conservatism's human imperfection, Marxism's creative labour, socialism's 'social beings', and anarchism's 'naturally good' or 'blank slate' conceptions, etc.

Based on what has been said above in this section, four characteristics might be regarded as being definitive of humans –

- (i) humans as creators and producers.
- (ii) human reason.
- (iii) humans as social beings.
- (iv) flexible 'human nature'.

and these are entirely interdependent, each implies the other and each would be ineffective without the others.

That there is both a universal and a particular, a natural and a social, aspect to human nature is relatively uncontested. Humans are not mere *tabula rasa* lacking any inherent characteristics, so that human nature is entirely a social construct, without limits on its plasticity. To repeat Lichthman –

“the very notion of human nature as a *tabula rasa* is self contradictory. Even a blank slate must have such properties as will permit the acceptance of the chalk...”.

The more difficult question is how these aspects are related.

A traditional *essentialist* position regards the natural (material / biological) and the social aspects of our make up as separate and distinct levels, only externally related to each other, but with the human 'essence' conditioning or determining the social. This runs into an array of difficulties that we consider in the next Chapter. Sayers contrasts this with *historicist* philosophers since Hegel who have argued that it is not possible to distinguish and separate what is natural from what is social in this way, the two exist in unity –

“Human beings are essentially social beings. Human nature necessarily exists in a specific social and historical context, and social relations are always the result of specific and historically determined forms of human nature. The notion of a universal and timeless human nature is an abstraction from this context”. (Sayers, 1998, p150)

In other words, there are not two quite distinct and externally related components, a universal need on the one hand and a series of socially modified preferences on the other. There is only one thing – a socially modified need, our needs are always modified by social life, so that the natural and the social aspects of our being always exist in unity. As Sayers puts it –

“If we are social beings ‘all the way down’, then we are, at the same time and equally, natural and biological beings ‘all the way up’. Even our most basic biological functions occur in a social context by which they are modified ; and even our highest and most socially developed achievements are the activities of the biological organism that we, as human beings, are”. (Sayers 1998 : p154)

In this sense, humans are '*natural-social beings*', our biology and our sociality interpenetrate. Humans are self-produced and active beings who by their very nature transform nature to satisfy their needs. In the process of doing so they change nature and change themselves, producing and reproducing themselves physically, socially, and intellectually as they acquire new needs, powers, and capacities. The outcome of their activities becomes objectified in enduring changes in both nature and social structures which then become, together, the material and cultural conditions facing successive generations. As material conditions change new opportunities open up for human development and individuals develop new needs and powers irreducible to the structures within which they were born

Such an approach is preferable to an essentialist position, and it is developed further in the section below on structure and agency.

## **6. Individuals.**

What all the above indicates in sweeping terms is that any conception of individuality or autonomy must be one that is circumscribed by both the *natural* and the *social*. But whilst sharing the core of species powers, socio-structural constraints, and specific forms of 'social character' with others, individuals remain individuals. They never encounter, receive, or interact in an identical way with the multiple determinations that frame their identities – the latter are shaped by the particularity of their encounters with the world. Individuated powers, capacities, and dispositions emerge from the interfaces between biological and psychological generic reality, the individual's own genetic inheritance, and his specific location in and experience of the social world. Individual personality refers to the totality of inherited and acquired psychological qualities which are characteristic of one individual. The difference between inherited and acquired qualities is generally synonymous with the difference between temperament, talents, and all constitutionally given psychological qualities on the one hand, and character and abilities on the other. Personality embodies biological and social dispositions, but each person remains a unique source of elaboration on their biological, social, and cultural conditioning.

Individuality entails a view of the individual as –

- (1) possessed of species and individuated capacities and potentials, needs, and interests that are not fixed but variable.
- (2) both conditioned and determined socially, but in which such social constitution can be (a) both enabling and constraining, and (b) not unmediated, unilateral, or unitary but plural, diverse, and reflexive, which, when combined with (1), creates a developmental potential for varying degrees of relative personal autonomy.

## **The Natural, Social, and Self-Determination.**

If an individual's self-determination rests upon something given to, and unchosen by, the self, then the most obvious candidates for being 'unchosen' are characteristics derived from nature or society. So 'self-determination' might be conceived of as being self-determination in accordance with –

- nature.
- society.
- the State
- own plans and projects.

If we look at each in turn –

**(1) the determination of oneself in accordance with one's 'nature'**, which is what might usually be thought of as some sort of 'self-realization', 'self-actualization', or 'authenticity'. However, 'nature' might refer to any of -

- (a) one's general 'nature' as human, or -
- (b) some 'essence' of one's human nature, some defining feature, or -
- (c) one's individual nature, one's specific capacities and potentials.

As noted previously, humans possess an ensemble of embodied species powers, capacities, and potentials – intelligence, self-consciousness, intentionality, creativity, rationality, specific temperaments and talents, etc, any or all of which may be enabling or constraining to one's self-determination. Any sustained process of self-determination, even if socially determined, must inevitably employ all of these to some degree. So, point (a) seems relatively uncontroversial and entails a developmental process that might loosely be described as 'self-realizing' according to the extent to which it is enabling rather than constraining. Point (b) remains a contested issue : liberalism's focus is reason ; and the one candidate supported by the individuality tradition would be the human creative capacity. Point (c) is the obvious specific candidate - individuated powers, capacities, and dispositions, the individual's own genetic inheritance, temperament and talents, etc., whether enabling



or constraining, will be the natural raw materials that incline ones self-determining efforts in particular directions. But in all three cases this development and realization of capacities and potentials must be self-determined. Inflicted poetry might cause someone to develop, but not to self-develop – better the fool satisfied than forced to become a dissatisfied Socrates.

**(2) the determination of oneself in accordance with the social** - some of the cultural practices, values, social relations, or history acquired from ones social context. Cultures that are pluralistic and diverse, and / or provide access to resources and opportunities, etc, may all facilitate self-determination : facilitate it ‘structurally’, by virtue of their pluralism and diversity, rather than as a deliberate policy. But any individual commitment to socially generated and acquired fundamental values, if it is to be in any sense ‘self-determined’, would seem to require a prior process of deliberation and reflection that employs those powers and capacities referred to in (1) above, (and in this sense is also a form of self-realization).

**(3) determination of oneself in accordance with the State** – an awkward one, and really a sub-category of (2) above. A State can be enabling or constraining to individual autonomy according to the practices and values it encourages or discourages; or it can foster a specific conception of autonomy, e.g. liberalism ; though either of these might work in unexpected ways. The enabling/democratic state would usually be contrasted favourably with the constraining/authoritarian one. Conceptions of how a State might best be enabling will be heavily contested. One of the peculiarities of liberalism is its perennial preoccupation with State power rather than social power as a threat to autonomy. If the State can so self-evidently be constraining to autonomy then why cannot society also be ?

**(4) the determination of oneself in accordance with self-chosen plans and projects** - founded on ones own will, agency, and preferences. But, again, do such ‘projects’ emerge spontaneously, or have to be discovered and developed, or have to be creatively and reflexively worked upon - a process of self discovery and self-definition. But this implies both (1a/c) above, the prior and ongoing development and

use of various natural capacities and potentials. And both these capacities and ones chosen plans and projects will be at least socially influenced or conditioned. So such self-choosing raises the issue of whether plans and projects can (a) ever be free of natural or social influences; (b) whether they need to be so if they are to be regarded as autonomous, and (c) free of both equally or, more especially, of the social ? The positions here vary : a purist might regard autonomy as transcending both social and biological determinants ; others might not regard biology as antithetical to autonomy (unless pathological) because biological endowment is 'internal' and therefore regarded as a key part of what defines the individual, whereas the social is regarded as 'external'.

Regarding these points. Firstly, the natural/social/political/individual are not easily separated in the above – each will condition the others, and it would certainly be difficult to isolate any process of individual self-determination that is not subject to enabling or constraining influences from elsewhere.

Secondly, in practice self-determination will be difficult to separate from self-realization, all of which can lead to a confusing and misleading picture as to what these things mean and entail. If self-determination is interpreted as being in control of one's own life then this would seem to require the prior and simultaneous development of capacities and potentials, which is associated with the meaning of 'self-realization'. Moreover, when analyzed in any depth, both personal autonomy and self-realization have clear overlaps with some sense of 'authenticity', of 'being true to self', which in turn resembles the Greek notion of 'eudaimonia'. What all of these concepts mean, and to what extent they are essentially similar or significantly different, or entail dubious notions of a 'real self', is complex and contested and the focus of the next Chapter.

What can be concluded on this question of the relationship between the natural/social/individual and self-determination ? Conceptions of self determination will vary according to –

- (a) the extent to which they rely on unchosen attributes, and –

- (b) whether the unchosen attribute is either 'natural' (1a,b, or c) or 'social', or some hybrid of the two.
- (c) whether what is 'unchosen' emerges spontaneously, or has to be discovered and developed, or has to be creatively and reflexively worked upon - a process of 'self-definition'.

These in turn will determine -

- (d) the ties between autonomy and related notions such as self-realization or authenticity, etc
- (e) whether any of the latter are open to the charge of being 'metaphysical' or premised on a conception of a 'real self' that has paternalistic implications.

We return to these issues later in this, and the next, Chapter. Before doing so we need to look at the wider 'structure and agency' debate, which is concerned with the relationship between the 'individual' and the 'social'.

## **THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY.**

Before looking at the different ways in which structure and agency are conceived to relate it is necessary to look at the issue of agency in isolation.

What we do when we act is a central question for social theory since it is here that the action's relative autonomy might be revealed. 'Actions' are always something an agent does, something performed for a purpose. Action describes the capacity of the actor to act consciously and creatively and contrasts with instinct where behaviour is un-thought. (Waters 1994 p11 and Ch 2 ; Parker et al 2003, Ch 7) Action is purposeful conduct, directed by the intentions of a voluntary agent, and actors have motives or purposes and are capable of initiating action rather than simply being forced to behave in some way. Actors can do other than they do, and what they do has to be explained in part by reference to the choices they make, and these choices can be subject to conscious deliberation. People set goals for themselves and act in

relation to these goals in an intentional way, and thereby give meaning to their behaviour. Consequently, agency tends to be associated with a range of linked concepts such as reflexivity, rationality, and motivation. It is this ability to make choices about conduct which qualifies actors to be considered as 'subjects' and not just 'objects'. This stress on agency implies that individuals are not the products, puppets, or victims of the social world, but rather that they are thinking, feeling, and acting subjects who can create the world around them, though they may do this intentionally or unintentionally.

But this raises a number of issues.

A first difficulty is that from the start there is a paradoxical aspect to agency, a problem of how, except in extreme cases, we would ever know the difference between deliberative-reflective action and spontaneous-unreflective action ; or action that is 'culture free' from action that is 'culture-led'. An agent is one who acts and, in order to act, one must initiate one's action, and one cannot initiate one's action without exercising one's power to do so. Since nothing and no one has the power to act except the agent herself, she alone exercises this power. Thus, as Sarah Buss argues, this means that insofar as someone is assumed to be an agent it must be correct to regard her own acts as being the outcome of her own judgments and decisions about how she should act, and therefore as authoritative (Buss 2002 p1-3). In short, every agent has an authority over herself that is grounded in the simple fact that she alone can initiate her actions. Consequently, in so far as a person acts then she is inevitably seen by herself and others as being an agent. If an agent does fail to govern herself, then this must be because, at the time, she lacks the power to do so. But what distinguishes motives whose power is attributable to the agent herself from motives whose power is external to the agent ? The difficulty is that the relevant powers are all within the mind of the individual agent, so there is no independently identifiable pair of standpoints in terms of which we can distinguish the powers that 'bully' the agent from the powers that can be attributed to the agent herself. In this sense just about everyone is, or appears to be, an agent, so it is difficult to produce a satisfactory account of both (a) the difference between agency and personal autonomy and (b) the relation between structure and agency - a point that seems to

underlie the ontological and methodological individualism discussed in Chapter 2. This issue is a perennial difficulty in the social sciences, and we return to it in the final part of this Chapter.

Secondly, action may be done deliberately and reflectively, self-conscious action that is carefully considered in advance; or spontaneous action that is done more or less unreflectively. The former, rational deliberation and appraisal, or following some predetermined plan or rule, seems likely to be the exception, if only because it is time consuming and possibly hard work and frustrating. Knowing what to do and making choices will more usually be based on something else, i.e. most action will be relatively spontaneous rather than deliberative; and it can be so because much action will already be 'scripted' by the customary norms, values, and practices of one's culture.

So, thirdly, most actions will be done under the pressure of immediate circumstances and probably better thought of as being governed by what Bordieu (1990) calls the 'logic of practice' – that to be practical we cannot base our action on deliberate rational anticipation, we are too caught up in the ongoing flow of life. The priority is 'doing' rather than reflection about what to do. Giddens (1984) suggests that the consciousness of people is first and foremost a 'practical consciousness' rather than a theoretically reflective and rationally deliberating one. People know what to do and how to carry on, but they do not need to be able to give reasons for what they are doing – the reasons are below the level of discursive articulation. Routines, habits, and dispositions to act in particular ways, rather than rational deliberation, are all aspects of such practical consciousness. Processes of 'routinization' mean that much of our activity falls below the horizon of being consciously decided. We also learn a general disposition in our upbringing which conditions our expectations and strategies when dealing with any situation. A disposition is a generalising tendency to place a particular sort of interpretation on circumstances and events, which makes it actionable, and results in regularities in our actions and the way we typically deal with problems. For example, in response to their experience of domination or subordination members of social classes learn about what it is practical to expect, what is achievable and what they can take for granted or presume. Bordieu calls this their 'habitus', and such dispositions are clearly the product of cultural and structural



conditioning. Agents become agents by being socialized and enculturated into a particular culture and society, and cultural and social practices license certain forms of behaviour and identity. As such, agents draw on cultural beliefs, rules, and values to form their intentions and enact their projects, and through this activity culture is itself reconstituted.

Where do these points leave us ? If we want to explain a specific action or pattern of action then part of our explanation must refer to the actors intentions and reasons for doing it : as the subjective agents of the action their motives for choosing to do it have explanatory power. But we will still need to explain their motives : the fact that actors make choices for reasons does not mean that their accounts of their reasons for acting are sufficient to understand those actions. Actions are intentional and rule-governed, they are performed with an end in view and this will often be in conformity with social rules. Often we will need to know the cultural mechanisms and economic and political interests generating their reasoning. Culture, social structure, and nature will all condition action, which is not to say determine it, and action mediates such conditioning : the force of natural, cultural, and structural conditions is mediated by how people interact with them. And the latter will be influenced by their relative power : the capacity to act depends not just on one's humanity, but on one's powers, and one's powers will in turn be influenced by one's relation to collectivities and institutions. One's position in hierarchies of power affects what one can do. Thus 'agency' must be related to 'structures'

## **STRUCTURE AND AGENCY.**

The 'structure and agency' debate within the social sciences concerns the relationship between the individual and society and the related issues of voluntarism and determinism, subjectivism and objectivism, the micro and the macro. The dispute essentially concerns the issue of what Archer calls conflation - the assertion of the primacy of either structure or agency as the ultimate constituents of society ; and 'epiphenomenalism' - which represents the two directions in which such conflation can occur - downwards (from structure) or upwards (from agency) - whereby structure or agency is each reduced to being an effect of the other. A third option is 'central conflation' where elision occurs in the middle : neither level is

determinant, both structure and agency being mutually constitutive, so examination of their interplay is precluded. (Archer 1998, p74-5 ; 2000 passim; Hay, 2002, p122-4).

In downwards conflation (e.g. structuralism, economism, technological determinism, communitarianism) action is epiphenomenal because there are no reflective, promotive, and innovative humans as such but only social agents who energize the system after appropriate socialization to structural constraints and boundaries. Agency is one-sidedly shaped by structure, and the agent is passive and lacks any relative autonomy because socially determined, rather than conditioned, by structure. Action and agency pervade the system, but lead nowhere except where structure guides them, people are the agents of structure. This is the 'oversocialized' or 'overdetermined' view of humans. It inevitably tends to reify society - merging self or personal identity into social identity, subsuming agency within structure and culture, and equating the latter with 'society' or 'community', these then demarcating the boundaries within which individual reflexivity and creativity can conceivably, or legitimately, operate.

Upwards conflation (e.g. interpretative sociology, rational choice theory, and always a tendency within liberalism) sees structure as the outcome of agency -- only individuals and their dispositions and properties (e.g. to be rational) have reality ; 'structure' is simply a metaphor for 'other people', a series of inter-subjectively negotiated constructs, it is fully reducible and coterminous with individuals and their interpersonal relations. It inevitably thereby naturalises or individualises structures, creating an under-constrained picture of agency that not only conceals the ways in which agency is subverted and constrained, or enabled, by structures, but also the way in which they do so unequally. In effect this perspective was discussed in Chapter 2 in the form of ontological and methodological individualism. The latter's empiricism and blindness to social / cultural structures renders its moral individualism formal and stunted, unable to deal adequately with issues of 'harm' and individual 'inviolability'.

For central conflation (e.g. Giddens' structuration theory) structure and agency form an inseparable duality rather than distinct strata of social reality, so that no distinctive emergent properties and powers pertain to each separately.

Individuality would reject these positions as extremes. The individual embodies both the natural and the social, but – as a starting point - the natural, the social, and the individual are best regarded from the 'critical realist' perspective as distinct and irreducible parts of a stratified reality, each with their own emergent properties and powers, and possessed of relative autonomy and causal efficacy, and in which each conditions and constrains, setting boundaries, rather than determines. The emergent properties and powers attaching to both structures and agents are relational and defined by necessary internal relationships which exert influences on their components. Since emergence characterizes both agency and structures then reductionism and conflation are avoided. Culture, social structure, and nature will all condition individual action, which is not to say determine it, and action mediates such conditioning : the force of natural, cultural, and structural conditions is mediated by how people interact with them. And the latter will be influenced by their relative power and one's powers will in turn be influenced by one's relation to collectivities and institutions.

Archer's analytical dualism is based on two simple propositions : structure necessarily predates the actions which transform it ; and structural elaboration necessarily postdates those actions –

Structural conditioning ----- interaction ----- structural elaboration

In what Archer calls 'structural conditioning', systemic properties are viewed as the emergent or aggregate consequences of past actions. Once they have been elaborated over time they are held to exert a causal influence upon subsequent interaction. They do this by shaping the situations in which later generations of agents find themselves and by endowing agents with different vested interests according to the positions they occupy in the structures they inherit. Thus pre-existing structural properties

have effects as constraining or facilitating influences upon agents which are not attributable or reducible to the practices of other contemporary agents. The only question is what agents will do with this heritage. Individual action and social interaction are seen as being structurally conditioned but not structurally determined – since agents possess their own irreducible emergent powers. Structural influences create frustrating or rewarding contexts for different agents and groups depending on the positions they occupy and these then condition different interpretations and responses : agents experiencing exigencies seek to eradicate them, and those experiencing rewards try to legitimate and retain them, thereby pursuing either structural change or stability. In this dialectical process agents and interest groups will be creative and innovative because contextual constraints can never be fully scripted and determining. Thus structural properties are slowly, or dramatically, modified as the combined product of the different outcomes pursued simultaneously by various agents and groups, and this is the process of structural elaboration . The latter is replete with unintended consequences because the specifics of the process of conflict and concession, the relative balances of power, the contextual circumstances, are variable and unpredictable. The outcome is a new elaborated structure which constitutes new conditional influences upon subsequent agency and interaction.

A basic starting point for this analysis is the premise that the social world itself is diverse and stratified, that social reality should not and cannot be understood as a unitary whole which is susceptible only to one kind of explanatory principle or theoretical assumption. The social world must be understood as ontologically multi-dimensional and as constituted by a number of domains which are interrelated in a complex manner. This starting point runs counter to approaches which insist that the social world is exclusively about interaction (and thus is primarily concerned with actor's reasons and motives), or that social life is entirely discursive in nature, or that 'inter-subjective relations', or 'social systems' are in themselves exhaustive ontological characterizations of the social world.

Secondly, the social world is unlike the natural world in the sense that much of the subject matter of the social world consists of intentional human beings who act as agents on that world and confer meaning on it. However, the social world is

analogous to the natural world in the sense that it also possesses objective features (in parallel with its subjective ones). It is this sense of externality and objectivity which is lost to analysis in those approaches which centralize meaning, action, and inter-subjectivity as the exclusive forms of social reality. Conversely those traditional positivist positions which emphasize the continuities between the natural and social sciences focus on the external world of social facts including objective and systemic features and thereby lose sight of subjective meaning, and so on. Both these positions are inadequate in so far as they do not work to fashion a connection between subjective and objective aspects of the social world. While we cannot deny the importance of inter-subjectivity it is even more important not to lose sight of the objective aspects of society. It is inadequate to suppose that because human subjectivity is important that therefore any notion of objectivism and the 'externality' of social reality are illicit reifications. It is also wrong to suggest that any form of objectivism is bound up with a 'false dualism' in which subjective and objective aspects are thought to be opposed and unconnected. What is proposed when referring to objective and external aspects of social life is a subjective-objective duality, not a disconnected dualism. The notion of a duality here refers to two continuously interrelated aspects of social life.

First, it indicates that society exists simultaneously both inside and outside individuals in the sense that while individuals deeply internalize the social world in order to become social beings, society is also inevitably a system of reproduced social relations which stretches beyond the power and influence of specific individuals and groups. The manner in which social life includes, at the same time as it reaches beyond, the domain of inter-subjectivity, requires that some sense of the objectivity and externality of social phenomena be registered.

The second aspect of the duality between objectivism and subjectivism concerns the interconnections between aspects of agency and structure. On the one hand, forms of agency represent the transformative capacities of individuals and groups as they come to terms with and alter the social circumstances they encounter in their everyday lives. On the other hand, systemic or structural aspects represent the historically formed standing conditions transmitted and inherited from the past which confront people as constraints and enablements. In this sense there is a convergence



and continuous dialectic between objective, intersubjective and subjective facets of social life. However, the subjective domain can be divided into two distinct subdomains: the intersubjective and the individual-subjective or what Layder calls the 'psycho-biographical domain' (Layder 1997, p47). The intersubjective domain represents an intermediary domain which mediates between objective and subjective aspects. Overall then there are three distinct ontological domains that need recognition. In saying that these are distinct ontological domains it is suggested that the social world possesses a varying array of characteristics and properties which cluster at various points or sites in the social order and represent different dimensions of social reality. At the same time there is no implication that the differing domains are separate and opposed and thus in analytic competition with each other (as implied in the critique of dualism); rather they are parallel features of social reality which bear complementary relations. Thus although not separated from each other the domains are different in both analytic and real senses. However, while distinct in their own right, the domains also overlap, interpenetrate and diffusely influence each other. This characterization of the relations between the domains connects with what Archer refers to as '*emergentism*' and which calls attention to the fact that different aspects or dimensions of social reality have their own 'emergent' properties. Thus emergentism indicates that particular domains are endowed with specific properties or characteristics allowing them to be distinguished from others. It is in this sense that they are different but connected features of social reality.

Another consequence of emergentism and the existence of a multidimensional social reality concerns the non-reducibility of levels of explanation with respect to the different domains. This means that with regard to the tripartite ontology of subjective / inter-subjective / objective it is important that each domain is counted for in its own right and is not understood as the effect or influence of some other level. Thus objective-systemic aspects cannot be thought to be the result of the aggregation of micro episodes, nor can inter-subjective properties be viewed simply as an effect or reflection of allegedly more important and far reaching objective (systemic or macro social) phenomena. Each domain has to be conceptualized as possessing its own internally distinct properties and effects and should not be understood as residues or epiphenomena of other domains. The domains will also relate to each other variably

according to different empirical circumstances. The important point is that their independent effects and properties not be lost to analysis by any form of explanatory reduction.

## **IS AUTONOMY POSSIBLE ?**

Individuality requires that self-determination is a possibility, and whether or not it is one will be powerfully influenced by –

- (1) our conception of the natural, social, and the individual, and of the relation between them, and whether these are conceived of as being intrinsically constraining or enabling to individual autonomy.
- (2) what we mean by autonomy, whether it means –

- (a) being independent of the natural and / or social, or –

- (b) tied (to a greater or lesser extent) to the natural and social in some way, as an ‘unchosen’ driving force that gives some foundation and direction to our autonomy, and /or –

- (c) a capacity, and opportunity, to reflect, deliberate upon, and revise, our relation to aspects of the natural and social.

Regarding Point (1), for example : a view of the ‘natural’ as a blank slate ; or an essence that determines ; or the creative ontology; etc. Or a view of the ‘social’ as unitary, or as plural and diverse ; as conditioning, or as always determining ; etc.

Point (2a), as we saw earlier in this Chapter, is not a serious option : the natural, social, and individual are distinct spheres with their own properties, and can be analytically separated, but there can never be a point at which the individual is independent of either of them : the individual is a ‘natural-social being’.

Regarding (2b) there are three points –

- (i) what we said above about the ‘natural’ was sweeping and basic, but its

simple claim was that nature – our natural species powers and capacities, both generic and individual - gives us the means to be agential and creative (individual pathology apart), but -

- (ii) the development of those means is dependent upon the social, and this brings us back to MacPherson's point in Chapter 2 about 'developmental power' - 'the ability to use and develop ones capacities' - capacities depend on innate endowment and past external impediments; the ability to use them depends on present external impediments. So the potential problem and impediment is the social : whether structural conditioning, internalized cultural imperatives, social pressure, and external coercion, facilitate or constrain that development. If it facilitates, then some aspect of the social can itself then also become a driving force of our autonomy.
- (iii) whether the 'unchosen' emerges spontaneously, or has to be discovered and developed, or has to be creatively and reflexively worked upon, a process of 'self-definition'. Which brings us to (2c).

Point **(2c)** will be closely tied to the three points of (2b), and may be essential to (iii). Humans have the 'natural' capacity or potential to deliberate and reflect, but the extent to which they practice and develop this will depend on the need and the opportunity to do so.

Individuality would take the points (2b) and (2c) positions, bearing in mind the qualifying comments. The problem for liberalism is that its conception of autonomy is focused far too much on point (2c) in isolation – the 'revisability thesis'. Thus the perennial charge that liberalism is a form of abstract individualism, an atomistic and asocial world. From the perspective of this liberal mindset everything will indeed appear ultimately to be revisable. The consequence is attributing autonomy, or the potential for it, to those who lack the means to achieve it, whilst simultaneously individualising the causes of this lack. Thus, its moral individualism becomes formal and stunted, unable to deal adequately with issues of 'harm' and individual 'inviolability' that arise from the effects of social structures.

## **Critique of Autonomy.**

As discussed in Chapter 3, liberal autonomy is a limited, rather than a 'perfectionist', conception of autonomy. Its essence is the 'revisability thesis'. Critics of this position argue that it is impossible to do (2c) – 'revisability' - without being (2a) – independent of the natural and social ; therefore autonomy is impossible.

Certainly liberalism often leaves itself wide open to this charge, because its conception of autonomy is focused far too much on point (2c) in isolation. But in general terms the critics go too far and blur two different positions –

- (1) we have agreed above that being independent of the natural and the social in the generic sense is impossible, and on this point the critics are correct. But this ignores that the natural and the social may themselves foster autonomy.
- (2) 'Revisability', etc, does not entail being independent of the natural and the social, and where the critics particularly err is that their conception of the social is too generic and unitary, and this downplays the way in which the nature of the social can itself generate autonomy.

We need to explore a bit further some of the detail of this 'anti-autonomy' critique.

In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill drew attention to how the social and cultural environment of a society can prevent its members from leading an autonomous life just as surely as can repression by the state. But contemporary debate approaches the issue of the 'social' differently. Mill's concern was the threat that the social posed to individual 'autonomy', the potential tyranny of the social. For many contemporary theorists the theoretical focus has moved to the impossibility of autonomy because of the all encompassing inevitability of the social, or the post-modernist displacement or de-centring of the subject. To repeat Rorty's earlier comment –

"Socialization goes all the way down, there is nothing beneath socialization or prior to history which is definatory of the human" (Rorty 1989 : pxiii).

Evans (2003, p117) outlines the objection to autonomy –



“human beings are inherently social creatures : the very language with which one would frame ones very sense of self is a social, not a private, construct that immediately implicates one in a (language) community. It is thus odd to set this basic fact aside straightaway in beginning the argument with an asocial ‘I’ ”.

Bevir (1996, p105) develops this view, arguing that autonomy refers to –

“individuals existing, reasoning, and acting outside particular social contexts”.

In other words, autonomy means that individuals must be independent of social forces, the latter would be external to individuals, but this is impossible. Archard takes a similar view. He suggests that –

“ A life is autonomous if, taken as a whole and in the main, its pattern and direction can be attributed to deliberate and conscientious choices on the part of the individual”. (Archard 1992, p 158)

For Archard, such autonomy is contradicted by ones *situation* and ones *character*. ‘Situation’ refers to the individual’s biological endowment, their rearing and education, and the wider social and historical setting. He argues that autonomy entails free choices, but that we make choices *as* characters, and what in our character motivates these choices is not in itself chosen. What we want is relative to our situation, and our situation shapes our character. Thus, autonomy is only possible if it can be shown that one need not be *engulfed* within ones situation and by ones character.

For communitarians the self is ‘embedded’, or ‘situated’ in, or ‘encumbered’ by, existing social practices that we cannot always stand back from or opt out of, that roles and relationships must often be taken as givens. Self determination is therefore exercised *within* our social identities, roles and relationships, rather than by standing outside them. Charles Taylor suggests that complete freedom to question all our roles and identities –

“would be a void in which nothing would be worth doing, nothing would deserve to count for anything. The self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external



obstacles and impingements is characterless, and hence without defined purpose". (Taylor 1979 : 157).

For Taylor, freedom must be, and is inevitably, situated. 'Communal values' must be 'authoritative horizons' which 'set goals for us' (Taylor 1979 :157-9)

This is because, in the communitarian view, the liberal position relies on a false account of the self. As Sandel argues the point, the self is not prior to its ends but constituted by them. Our selves are at least partly constituted by ends that we discover rather than choose because we are embedded in some shared and ongoing social context, social roles, and goals. (Sandel 1982 : 55-9, 152-4) This context, roles, and goals are constitutive attachments that are discovered rather than chosen, and as 'self-interpreting' beings we can explore and interpret their meaning, but we cannot choose or reject them. Because they are constitutive of me as a person they have to be taken as a given in deciding what to do with my life, though I am at liberty to interpret their meaning. It would make no sense to reject them, to claim that they are trivial or degrading, because they are me, there is no self prior to these constitutive attachments.

These views of the '*inevitability*' of the social have different sides to them : theoretically, there are those who view the social *intersubjectively* (*upwards or central conflation*), and those who view it *structurally* (*downwards conflation*) ; ideologically, there are those who are critical of *existing* social arrangements, and those who are *supportive*. But what they all agree on is the improbability of autonomy, what the sociologist Archer refers to as 'social imperialism' and 'asphyxiation by social forces' (Archer 2000, p18, 22).

### **Problems with this Critique of Autonomy.**

A difficulty with all such views is their conception of both 'autonomy' and the 'social' -

(1) **Conception of autonomy** : as two extremes, social relations can be viewed as being -

- (a) internal to individuals, on the grounds that individuals are socially constructed and determined ;
- (b) or external, because individuals are somehow self-constituting but socially situated and influenced.

Autonomy is generally taken to mean being *independent* of social forces, so if autonomy is to be possible such social forces must be conceived of as being external to individuals. The 'social' and 'autonomy' are therefore antithetical, so that if humans are social then they cannot also be autonomous. Both liberal individualism and its critics appear to accept this view : the latter as a critique of autonomy, because they conceive of social relations as internal to the individual ; the former to support autonomy, because they are always at risk of interpreting social relations as external to the individual.

But clearly there must be a third, or a hybrid, option between these two extremes : individuals can be *both* socially constructed and determined but also self-constituting, so that the 'social' and 'autonomy' are not antithetical, for reasons indicated below.

**(2) Conception of the social :** to say that humans are social beings can initially only mean that they are socially situated and that individual agency is constituted by relations with others – that ones activities and self-identity are relational, interactive, and intersubjective : that the constitution of the self is '*relational*' and *either socially conditioned or determined*. What we can conclude beyond this point, regarding individual autonomy and the social, must vary according to the specific character and complexity of a particular society. However, critics of autonomy seem to use the notion of the 'social' as though it refers to some *unitary* and all encompassing monolithic whole that engulfs and determines the individual. But in principle, and practice, the notion of the 'social' can refer to any or all of a variety of different levels of the social : interpersonal, groups, subcultures, different traditions, competing values, conflicting interests, mainstream culture, social institutions, social structure, etc. Within, and between, each of these there may be diversity and

tensions, conflicts and contradictions, competing interests and beliefs, and each may impact on individuals in different ways and to varying extents according to specific circumstances and the particularity of each individuals experience. As a consequence, any or all of the levels and relations of the 'social' may be *either constraining or enabling* to individual autonomy.

Sher (1997, p158) identifies three levels of the relationship between the individual and society –

- (a) society causally influences, but fails to penetrate, the self.
- (b) social penetration is extensive, but does not reach the deeper self.
- (c) there is no deeper self, society penetrates to the core of the self.

To avoid further argument, let us accept (c) : the social may penetrate to the core of the individual, so he is then ontologically *social*. But to assume that this therefore denies any possibility of autonomy is to misunderstand the social : the plurality, diversity, tensions, and contradictions of the social are in themselves a source of potential individual autonomy.

For example, at least five models of the impact of the 'social' on individual autonomy might be imagined –

### **(1) Unitary Social Determination.**

A society has an organic unity and common culture. Its social structure consists of interdependent parts, lacking any structural contradictions or tensions that might generate a lack of social integration . Social groups and individuals have common and shared interests, beliefs, and values, and needs and interests are satisfied fairly. There are no structural or cultural sources of conflict., only interpersonal ones. The individual is socially engulfed and socially determined, therefore individual autonomy is constrained, but the individual is enabled to develop capacities and potentials.

## **(2) Pluralistic Social Determination.**

The society is pluralistic with diverse sub-cultures and traditions. Structural tensions occur, and social groups have diverse interests and values, both of these generating social conflicts and competition between different traditions and values. The individual is socially engulfed and determined, but by a plurality of diverse interests, subcultures, and traditions, thereby generating scope for individual reflexivity and for relative autonomy. Consequently, the impact of the 'social' must be conceived of as being both enabling and constraining to autonomy. To what extent capacities and potentials can be realized will depend on the prevailing structures of inequality and opportunity.

## **(3) Socially Constituted and Conditioned but not Socially Determined.**

As in (2). But despite the extent to which individuals are social beings, and activity is social rather than purely individual, the influence of the social is not all encompassing and is one of conditioning rather than determination. Individuals are socially constituted, but with human capacities and potentials that are innate and not the product of their social environment, so there is also a crucial and irreducible extent to which individuals are independent of their social environment.

## **(4) Self-Constituting but Socially Conditioned.**

The individual is a product of their own innate endowments, but is strongly conditioned by the culture, groups, and relationships he is a part of, in ways that are both enabling and constraining to autonomy.

## **(5) Self-Constituting and Socially Constrained.**

The individual is a product of own innate endowments, self-developing, self-sufficient and self-determining, and social practices are external to, and constraints

upon, the individual. The 'abstract individual', 'squatting outside society', of traditional liberal theory.

All but (1) create a context for individual autonomy. But it is as though the critics of autonomy always conceive of the social / autonomy relation in terms of (1), even though they would mostly acknowledge that such a society is rare. They also seem to typically present matters as a stark contrast or choice theoretically between (1) and (5) – social engulfment or atomic individualism. But (2) also socially engulfs and determines individuals, but in ways that will be both enabling and constraining to autonomy. Positions (3) and (4) all allow that the impact of the social can be enabling or constraining to autonomy, and that the 'social' and 'autonomy' are not automatically antithetical.

What I want to do now is to look at the different forms of autonomy in the light of our discussion in this and the previous Chapter.

## **FORMS OF AUTONOMY.**

Although *agency* underlies all forms of action we can nevertheless be agents in different ways, there must be types and degrees of agency. The two previous Chapters identified four types of self-determination -

Agency.

Ethical Autonomy.

Personal Autonomy.

Moral Autonomy.

and we need to clarify and amend this further in the light of the previous discussion.

If the individual is a composite of the natural and the social then 'agency' should be taken as always incorporating and expressing both. But, in addition, perhaps we need to also distinguish what might be called '*natural agency*' and '*social agency*', in acknowledgement of the possibility that some things that we do are driven predominantly by one rather than the other, even though the 'natural' will always be



filtered in some way through the social. Thus, 'natural agency' would link with, for example, creative ontology, generic or individual needs and drives, specific capacities and potentials, temperament and talents, etc.

Regarding the more usual sense of agency, and to re-cap some points from the previous Chapter . Christman (2003:p2-3), characterises agency as '*basic autonomy*', which is central to the concept of a person, the 'minimal status of being responsible, independent, and able to speak for oneself'. For Johnston (1994: 71-5), as we have seen, agency consists of the capacity to conceive and act upon projects and values, including ones that are about things other than ones own experiences. Similarly, Rawl's, (1972 : p505) seems to use autonomy in this sense of agency, that individuals are capable of having a conception of the good - plans, projects, and values they wish to pursue. For Johnston, such agency differs from the more highly developed '*personal autonomy*', and this corresponds to Christman's distinction between 'basic autonomy' and 'ideal' or 'authentic' autonomy.

For all these and similar, theorists, an '*agent*' is conceived of roughly as follows : someone who makes choices and decisions, has a capacity to deliberate upon and revise the given, and therefore at least some minimum capacity to stand apart from current ends and question them ; is capable of conceiving and striving to realize projects and values; but these do not transcend the boundaries of existing structures and culture. In contrast, a person who is *personally autonomous* seeks to exercise control over his life, would proactively struggle to choose or create the projects and values he wishes to pursue, subjecting them to critical appraisal. The latter involves the sense of 'ethical autonomy' and '*moral vocation*' referred to previously, some self-determined commitments entailing prior or ongoing processes of self-discovery and self-definition.

But these distinctions complicate the simple 'structure / agency' distinction used by sociologists – their agency being subdivided here into basic agency and personal autonomy. But as suggested earlier, the broad contrast between the extremes of 'structure' and 'agency' is too bare and stark for our purposes anyway, and it can also be misleading because social structures and culture themselves generate forms

of agency. Culture, social structure, and nature will all *condition* action, which is not to say *determine* it, and action mediates such conditioning : the force of natural, cultural, and structural conditions is mediated by how people interact with them. So, agency might be sub-divided in to *action* and *agency*, or *structural action* and *structural agency*, the latter entailing a greater degree of deliberation, reflection, and creativity than the former. Structures and cultures have to be actioned and reproduced – and this might be done passively, or actively and creatively. Structures and culture are rarely totally fixed and rigid, and sometimes will never be so; they provide a broad framework of enablement and constraint; but the constraints are not always absolute, and the scripts are only half-written, they have to be ‘fleshed out’ through practice and experience as they evolve and as circumstances change. Consequently, actors can be, and need to be, agents *within* social structure and culture because the latter generate agency.

Thus, in terms of Johnston’s three forms of autonomy - agency, moral autonomy, and personal autonomy : his account of ‘agency’ corresponds to what I would call ‘*structural action*’ or ‘*structural agency*’, and these terms seems to better convey his sense of it, whilst avoiding confusion with the more generic sense of agency as used by sociologists. His notion of *moral autonomy* is the standard liberal one of ‘other-regarding’ concern and respect. This was shown to be too narrow and unsatisfactory for our purposes, and a distinction between ethical and moral autonomy was felt to be necessary. Personal autonomy is the nearest equivalent to ‘self-determination. All of these, except ‘structural action’, would be covered by the sociologists ‘agency’, which suggests that the latter is too broad to be useful, except for liberals.

So we could distinguish between a range of types or levels of autonomy –

**‘Natural Agency’** : a mix of the generic and the individual. Creative ontology, generic or individual needs and drives, specific capacities and potentials, temperament and talents, etc, even though these will invariably be filtered in some way through the social.

**Structural Action** : when action is almost entirely *determined* by structure and culture, leaving little or no room for agency. Actors are operationalising structures and culture, *acting* out a part they have internalised, or have no choice in, and there is nothing in the context or their own motivations to generate agency or autonomy.

**Structural Agency** : when action is only partly *determined* by structures and culture, or only conditioned by them, making space for agential reflection, creativity, and innovation, etc, but still within the boundaries created by culture and structure. Liberalism's '*revisability thesis*' fits easily here.

**Moral Autonomy** : in Johnston's and Rawls use of the term, when action recognizes that others are agents like oneself, with projects and values of their own, and that these may impose limits on the things that can be done in pursuit of ones own projects and values. In effect this is a sub-category of the previous one. What it means in practice will be determined or conditioned by the structural and cultural context, and the prevailing conceptions of *harm*. One aspect of this is whether or not the prevailing culture endorses some conception of ethical autonomy : in its absence, moral autonomy is likely to be reduced to a *moral minimalism*.

**Ethical Autonomy** : when action recognizes that inviolability creates duties towards ones-self, a moral vocation, and that ones own conception of the good must therefore respect ones *own* inviolability as well as that of others. This ethical self and ethical autonomy then forms the basis for other-regarding actions (or moral autonomy). It is also internally related to –

**Personal Autonomy** : when action is conditioned by structure and culture but leaves space for relatively autonomous deliberative reflection and creative action. This may happen due to one or a mix of any of the following : during times of structural and cultural change; as a response to structural or cultural tensions or contradictions; in contexts of structural or cultural diversity and pluralism; or as an independent act of will and reflection, as conditioned by the individual's own circumstances and natural agency.

The problem is that all of these will appear to be *agential*. As we saw earlier, the paradoxical aspect of agency is how we would ever recognize a difference between deliberative-reflective action and spontaneous-unreflective action ; or action that is 'culture free' from action that is 'culture-led'. In so far as a person acts then she is inevitably seen by others as being an agent. And this then camouflages any attempt to make subtle distinctions between levels of agency or autonomy. From the perspective of the liberal mindset most things will indeed appear ultimately to be *revisable*. The consequence is attributing autonomy, or the potential for it, to those who lack the means to achieve it, whilst simultaneously individualising the causes of this lack.

We are certain to practice *all* of these types of autonomy at different point in our lives, or even at different points in each day, in relation to different choices and decisions and different constraining or enabling circumstances. The second, third, and fourth might fit together, as do the fifth and sixth, but it is improbable that the personally and ethically autonomous individual will not often be reduced to being a structural/cultural actor or agent in relation to some choices and decisions. As taxonomy all this makes some rough sense, but the difficulty is how we would spot the differences in practice. There would be difficulties in identifying, and separating, each type because *there will be no clear and objective standard of each*.

Liberal-individualism tends to avoid this problem because it uses 'autonomy' to describe agency/basic autonomy and moral autonomy, and it is in terms of these that most adults are deemed 'autonomous' and, therefore, morally and legally responsible, politically equal, and deserving of respect. Johnston regards these as necessary features of a liberal society and intrinsically valuable, whereas he regards personal autonomy as having only instrumental value insofar as it contributes to an individual's capacity to be an effective agent (Johnston 1994, p 98). In contrast, individuality regards ethical and personal autonomy as necessary features of the individual's self-determination, and a basis for moral autonomy.

## CONCLUSION.

At the end of Chapter 3 we were left with the crucial question of in what sense autonomy is possible. As noted at the start of this Chapter, the fact that we are all individual personalities characterised by individual differences does not in itself confirm the presence of autonomy. Individuality requires that autonomy is a possibility, and the argument behind this emerges from the inviolability context discussed in Chapter 2. But different conceptions of inviolability lead to different senses of what is meant by autonomy, and the conditions of its achievement. In this Chapter I have attempted to show that the self-determination which individuality requires *is* a possibility, but that the simple agency/structure dichotomy is too simple and that there are a range of levels of agency and autonomy.

In Chapter 3 it was suggested that one of the problems of 'liberal autonomy' is the sense of something missing from it, that the concept of autonomy has to be tied to something else that is given to and unchosen by the self, that autonomous choice can never be a pure choice, but must be concerned to at least some minimal degree with the discovery / development and expression of one's deepest predispositions or commitments as the basis for our choices. Thus, free deliberation and choice are crucial, but as a means of tapping into something more substantive that gives some foundation, substance, direction, or authenticity to our autonomy. The candidates for the latter that we have reviewed in this Chapter are something derived from the 'natural' or the 'social'.

As discussed in this Chapter, if by autonomy is meant being independent of the natural and the social, in the sense of being *separate* from them, then such imagined absolute autonomy is not only impossible but negates autonomy. In the absence of our very specific natural-social human characteristics we would be beings of instinct with little or no capacity for autonomy. The human potential for autonomy arises precisely *because* of our particular natural-social characteristics, and not despite them. Yet, at the same time, the natural and the social will both enable and constrain autonomy. The potential for autonomy is at the centre of a three-way dialectic, the



relation between the individual and their embodiment of the natural and the social, in both enabling and constraining forms : without the natural and the social, individuality would be *empty*; without the struggle to develop, re-shape, or transcend them, it would be an *illusion*. What makes an individual, and thereby makes autonomy and individuality, is the way one actively responds to and shapes these influences, the creativity of the process, and the embodied natural-social both enable and constrain this.

Four key points have been made -

(1) The Natural : what was said in this Chapter about the ‘natural’ was sweeping and basic, but its simple claim was that nature – our natural species powers and capacities, both generic and individual - gives us the means to be agential and creative (individual pathology apart), but that the development of those natural means is constrained or enabled by the social.

(2) The Social : humans are ontologically social, but all this means with certainty is that they are socially situated, relational, and inter-subjective. This is a far cry from the oversocialized and socially engulfed view of, for example, communitarianism, or the downwards conflation of structural sociology. As we have seen at length, even if the social is *engulfing* it rarely is so in an entirely coherent, unitary, or monolithic way. Social structures and cultures are more usually plural and diverse, or pervaded by structural and cultural tensions and contradictions, and these in themselves are a source of potential individual autonomy, often in unexpected ways.

But the more specific point is MacPherson’s (1973) one about ‘developmental power’ - ‘the ability to use and develop ones capacities’ is dependent on past and present impediments, and the potential impediment here is the social : whether structural conditioning, internalized cultural imperatives, social pressure, and external coercion, facilitate or constrain that development, including the capacity to be autonomous. If they facilitate, then aspects of the social can themselves also become a driving force of our autonomy.

(3) The Individual : individuals are outcomes of both generic and individuated natural and social forces, so they never encounter or interact in an identical way with the multiple determinations that frame their identities. Individuated powers, capacities, and dispositions emerge from the interfaces between biological and psychological generic reality, the individual's own genetic inheritance, and their specific locations in and experience of the social world, ending up with different temperaments and talents, characters and abilities, and social characters, expectations, and values. Each person remains a unique source of elaboration on their biological, social, and cultural conditioning. So the individual sphere is an inter-subjective cauldron of plurality and diversity ; of competing needs and interests; of tensions and conflicts. And this context itself generates the potential for autonomy from the particularities of ones own experience.

But for the individual, the process of becoming autonomous is not something which happened spontaneously, but will involve the three processes of self-determination discussed in Chapter 3 –

**Self-discovery** : one must know who one is – *who am I and what drives me ?*

**Self-definition** : one must be able to establish one's own standards and modify one's qualities to meet them – *who and what do I want to be ?*

**Self-direction** : one must express one's self identity, ones character and commitments, in action.

and in these respects, becoming autonomous is a creative and reflexive process, a process of self-definition and taking greater control of one's life.

(4) Levels of Agency and Autonomy : in concluding that autonomy is a possibility the Chapter sought to clarify different levels of autonomy and rejected the broad agency/structure dichotomy as being too vague and misleading. Social structures and culture have to be operationalised and reproduced and thereby generate forms of agency. But such agency may be passive, active, or creative according to circumstances. The problem with all such forms of action or agency is that they will

all appear to be autonomous. So in place of a simple agency/structure dichotomy it seemed necessary to distinguish between natural agency, structural action, and structural agency, each embodying differing degrees of relative autonomy, but all of which are distinct from the kind of personal autonomy whose possibility we have been concerned with in this Chapter.

Whilst this Chapter has sought to clarify whether autonomy is possible and the forms it takes, this does not mean that there is any clear or objective standard of it by which it might be recognized. This returns us to the theme of balancing a subjective and objective standard of the good described in Chapter 3 in relation to the Right and the Good, and this is picked up again in Chapter 6.

But the more immediately relevant issue is how autonomy, and its basis in the natural and social, relates to the second feature of 'ethical autonomy' discussed in Chapter 2, self-realization, the subject of the next Chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5 SELF-REALIZATION AND AUTHENTICITY.**

The idea of self-realization appears to be of a quite different nature to self-determination because it is usually associated with the notion that aspects of the self are 'pre-given' rather than chosen, a development wherein persons achieve goods that are somehow inherent in their 'natures' by unfolding certain of their latent powers. But in the previous Chapter it was concluded that self-determination can never be absolute, but remains a possibility emerging out of the relationship between the natural, the social, and the individual. That aspects of the natural and the social will constitute an 'unchosen' basis underlying our self-determination. The suggestion now is that the 'unchosen' is what self-realization seeks to realize, but that self-determination is an inseparable part of this process. As discussed in Chapter 1 developmental individuality emphasizes personal growth and human flourishing and concerns the extent to which individuals are able to both –

**Self-determine** – that all individuals should as far as possible determine and control the course of their life..... not subject to internal or external forces independent of conscious choice. As such it involves processes of self-discovery, self-definition/creation, and self-direction.

**Self-realize** – that all individuals should have the opportunity to realize capacities and potentials, to exercise and develop the distinctively human powers, without constraint by humanly controllable factors, which entails access to necessary developmental opportunities and resources.

As indicated in the previous Chapter, self-determination is difficult to separate from self-realization, all of which can lead to a confusing and misleading picture as to what these things mean and entail. If self-determination is interpreted as being in control of one's own life then this would seem to require the prior and simultaneous development of capacities and potentials, which is associated with the meaning of 'self-realization'. Moreover, when analysed in any depth, both personal autonomy and self-realization have clear overlaps with some sense of 'authenticity', of 'being

true to self'. What all of these concepts mean, and to what extent they are essentially similar or significantly different, or entail dubious notions of a 'real self', is complex and contested and the subject of this Chapter.

Self-realization is linked in this Chapter with the different, but related, notion of 'authenticity'. Both self-realization and authenticity are a part of the individuality tradition, but not of liberal-individualism. Both are tied to self-determination, and both acknowledge a relation between the natural, social, and individual. Both also seem to be misunderstood and misrepresented. As was evident in Chapter 3, for liberal individualism the concept of autonomy leads naturally into 'authenticity' – some sense of being 'true to self'. The link is that autonomy must be authentic, our preferences, the endorsement of our choices, must be *informed* : if we are deceived or deluded then our endorsements may not be genuine or authentic. Whilst accurate and acceptable in itself this nevertheless gives a particular liberal twist to 'authenticity' – makes it something *instrumental*, to do with rational reflection and deliberation. As such, the concept of authenticity is incorporated within autonomy, it becomes 'authentic autonomy'. In contrast, for individuality, 'being true to self' has a sense of expressing something deeper from within the self. The contrast here is between an *expressive* rather than *instrumental* reflexivity, and this distinction is explored later in the Chapter. For liberal-individualism authenticity and, particularly, self-realization, are examples of 'perfectionism', and thereby subordinated to autonomy. As we shall see in the next Chapter, there is also a longstanding tendency in liberal culture for authenticity and self-realization to be linked to 'external goods'.

### **Self-Realization.**

Self-realization is to 'discover' and develop our potentialities and to live according to them. Associated with it, according to Norton, is –

“the ethical doctrine (which achieved its first systematic formulation in the words of Socrates and the writings of Plato and Aristotle) that each man is obliged to know and live in truth to his *daimon* (potentialities), thereby progressively actualising the excellence that is his innately and potentially” (Norton 1976 p,ix).



There are problems with this that we will return to below. The two fundamental requirements of self-realization were inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi : *'Know thyself'* and *'Accept your destiny'*. To know oneself is to know ones potentialities, and to accept ones destiny is to live so as to realize them. Our potentialities, then, are what we should aim to realize, and this provides the standard for our conception of good lives. Good is what accords with our potentialities. So the supreme moral injunction would be –

“to become the person he potentially is and ....cultivate the conditions by which others can do likewise”. (Norton1976 p358).

The idea of SR is usually associated with the notion of a *'pre-given self'*, that it relies on something pre-determined and given to the self. This is a common assumption about all such terms as self-realization, self-actualization, authenticity - all appearing to suggest a favourable development wherein persons achieve goods that are somehow inherent in their *'natures'*, by unfolding certain of their latent powers. To be self realized / actualised means that what is potential in oneself – ones *human* talents and abilities for example – are made actual. The self is viewed here as a locus of powers or capacities that are available for growth and development and self-realization is the process of attaining this development. The good life of the person consists in the process of realizing such potentialities. Our developed potentials must be externalised, become a part of our social self, the self that others recognize us as. Both must happen freely – if someone forces you to develop a potential against your will then you cannot self-realize – your own self must determine its development.

However, in contrast to these positions, 'self-realization' can be conceived of as being as much a matter of *making or constituting* oneself as it is of affirming a *pre-given* self - the *'realization of a self'*, the *achievement* of a self. For illustrative purposes only, there might be a number of possible senses of this, for example : someone who utilises their own powers and capacities and is self controlled, rather than being externally controlled by others who develop at their expense ; or, alternatively, to realize the self's life plans; or self realization in the sense of achieving a coherent / integrated self. Each of these does entail the use and development of human powers and potentials, which is the more usual interpretation

of self-realization, but also bring its meaning closer to what would normally be understood by self-determination.

## **THE CONCEPT AND CONCEPTIONS OF SELF-REALIZATION.**

As the above illustrates, the concept of SR might be used quite diversely, and because it has not been subject to extensive analysis there is a danger that what it does, could, or might mean becomes swamped or restricted by what it has been utilised to mean by a particular theorist or in certain historical circumstances. Probably the best example of this is Isaiah Berlin's influential critique of self-realization, which is reviewed later in the Chapter. Consequently, as Rawls (1972, pp 5-6) does in relation to justice, we need initially to distinguish between the *concept* of self-realization and its rival *conceptions*. And this will be informed by discussion in the previous Chapter about the relation between the natural, social, and individual. The concept of self-realization establishes its core meaning, the common ground, which is then open to diverse interpretations. Thus, Berlin's critique is of a specific *conception* of self-realization, rather than the concept itself.

### **The Concept of Self-Realization.**

Regarding the *concept* itself, this will have a general meaning (applicable to all) and a specific meaning (applicable to individuals), though individual self-realization must simultaneously entail the development of generic capacities. Perhaps a simple way of stating or conveying the *concept* of self-realization is through MacPherson's (1973, p42) notion of '*developmental power*' discussed previously. This refers to '*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*'. Elster summarises the Marxist tradition on SR in similar terms –

“SR is the full and free actualisation and externalisation of the powers and abilities of the individual”. (Elster 1986, p101).

For MacPherson 'capacities' refers to what there is to be exercised ; the amount of a person's capacities is not the same as his ability to use them - capacities depend on innate endowment and past external impediments; the ability to use them depends on

present external impediments. Our ability to use and develop capacities is regarded by MacPherson as a social issue, a reflection of our social relations.

### **(1) Generic Self-Realization.**

Humans possess a range of generic and individuated powers, capacities, and potentials. The idea of selves being realized suggests that attributes which identify humans in general, are being brought to some kind of fruition – dispositions, powers, and potentials being expressed and developed. Embodied species powers, capacities, and potentials are wide ranging – mind, intelligence, self-consciousness, reflexivity, intentionality, creativity, rationality, linguistic capacity, sociality, emotional dispositions etc. So one sense of SR is that of selves using and developing these generic capacities – *humans as developers, enjoyers, and exerts of their uniquely human attributes*. How they use them is not prescribed.

Four characteristics previously described as being definitive of humans are –

- (i) creation and production.
- (ii) reason.
- (iii) sociality.
- (iv) flexibility.

and these are entirely interdependent. The notion of humans as ‘*naturally*’ creators and producers functions as a fundamental mechanism at the heart of individuality, but it is inseparably tied to both reason and sociality, and open-ended, and therefore not regarded here as a ‘single factor’ or *essentialist* model of self-realization.

### **(2) Individual Self-Realization.**

If we take the concept of the self to denote an individual personality, conscious of its own existence and identity, then the idea of a self ‘*being realized*’ suggests that *individual* dispositions, powers, and potentials are expressed and developed : individuated powers, capacities, temperament, talents, character, and abilities which emerge from the interfaces between biological and psychological generic reality, the individual’s own genetic inheritance, and his specific location in and experience of

the social world. This could include dispositions to do certain things, or behave in certain fashions, expressions of certain traits or commitments, which express the nature and identity of that self. So, not only is the process of realization concerned with bringing these to the fore in one's life – whether by exercising the powers, developing the potentials, or acting so as to express certain characteristics – but has to be such that it reflects as best as possible one's individual identity, who we are and what we are capable of doing.

(1) and (2), might be regarded as being the generic and the individual versions of the *concept* of self-realization. The details seem likely to be contested (see Archard 1987, p21, Elster 1986), and we explore this further below in the section on critiques of self-realization. It is difficult to go any further than this without invoking features that would be rejected by others and regarded as being components of a *specific conception* of self-realization, though most of these features would be a part of individuality's version of it.

### **Conceptions of Self-Realization.**

Whereas the concept of self-realization establishes its core meaning, the common ground, this will then be open to diverse interpretations which build into it specific components that will be more hotly contested. I look at five such components here, though others may be added.

### **Self-Realization as Essentialist.**

A *generic essentialist conception*, which is rejected here, would argue that for *all* individuals what must be realized is a specific and distinctive single feature that is ultimately definitive of humans, though this may be realized in a range of possible ways. Some of the usual examples are : Aristotle's, or liberal, reason ; Marx's view of realization through non-alienated labour; the ontological claim of the individuality tradition, humans *as creators and producers* in the widest sense; a conservative or communitarian stress on 'community' values; the socialist 'social being'. However,

the essentialist status of all of these is arguable, and they will vary in terms of how prescriptive or flexible they are.

*Individual essentialism* would be an extreme version of this, holding the view that each individual has a true nature or self, so that self-realization will consist of realizing it; that for each person what is realized is *individually specific* - an *individual* 'essence', such that each individual can only realize herself in this one particular way.

### **Self-Realization as Social.**

Whilst self-realization involves a relation between the *natural* and the *individual* some versions will see it as being exclusively so, the social being marginalized. Conversely, conceptions of self-realization as being social will tend to marginalize the natural and the individual, an approach typical of 'communitarianism', for example Taylor's view of 'social authenticity' discussed later in this Chapter (Taylor 1991).

For individuality, both the natural and individual will be mediated by the *social* - all the features of self-realization will be at least socially conditioned and subject to social constraints and enablements to a greater or lesser extent.

### **Self-realization as Actualization, Discovery, or Creation.**

Conceptions of how self-realization is conceived of as taking place will vary enormously - the contrasts being between potentialities that, in suitable conditions, either –

- emerge *spontaneously* unless blocked, a process of *actualisation*, or
- have to be *discovered and developed*, or
- have to be *made* and manifested by being *creatively and autonomously* worked upon.



all three of which will again not simply be an interaction of the natural and the individual, but be subject to the social.

Humanistic Psychology (Rogers, 1961) for example has a reputation for favouring 'actualization'; conservatism and forms of communitarianism have emphasised 'discovery'; whereas individuality would acknowledge all three, but favour 'creation'.

### **Self-Realization as Entailing Self-Knowledge.**

The self remains to be *made*, and none of the above is likely to be realized without self-knowledge. To be human is to be an identity problem to oneself, of deciding what to do with one's life, of learning to recognize ideal goods and choosing amongst them which to aim at, the problem of acquiring the resourcefulness and force of character to overcome the internal and external obstacles. All this requires self-knowledge based on experience and deliberation, the processes of self-discovery and self-definition. This is a key element of ethical autonomy. Choices based on self-knowledge become commitments. And knowledge and understanding of self is the best route to understanding others.

### **Self-Realization as Self-Determined.**

Some conceptions of SR give little weight to self-determination, seeing it instead as being a form of discovery or spontaneous actualisation. For individuality, *self-determination* is a necessary condition of self-realization – what in Chapter 3 was described as '*self-activity*', which combines the notions of free (self-determined) activity with that of creative (self-realizing) activity – not controlled by outside forces but directed by oneself, e.g. inflicted poetry might cause someone to develop, but not to *self-develop*. Another way of stating this is that the individual can realize himself only in those projects which he has chosen / endorsed. As Elster describes it,

“The reason why the choice of a vehicle for SR must be freely made by the individual is that otherwise it would not be *self-realization*. The individual is both the designer and the raw material of the process. Hence self-realization

presupposes .....the right to choose which of ones abilities to develop” (Elster 1986, p 101).

Individuality’s notion of self-realization would derive from all these component features of SR, though any essentialist version is rejected as improbable in isolation. The standard criticisms of self-realization are reviewed later in the Chapter, but at this point we need to develop the concept of it further, which might also defuse some of the former.

## **SELF-REALIZATION AND PERFECTIONISM.**

‘Perfectionism’ is generally a concept used by non-perfectionist liberals to describe non-liberal theories of the good and justice. It seems unlikely that those so categorized would be comfortable with the label as it is not entirely apt and has pejorative connotations. As described in Chapter 3, ‘perfectionism’ is the idea that it is possible to formulate a conception of the good life for all humans, a *summum bonum*, an objective standard that is good for its own sake and for everyone, *even though this objective standard may not at present be subjectively endorsed by most people*. The goodness of a life then depends on how closely it approximates this conception. Platonists, Aristotelians, Jesuits, Marxists, and others, will disagree about what the *summum bonum* is, but they agree about its existence. (Passmore 1970, passim; Kekes 1989, Ch 6).

A hardline perfectionist argument (e.g. essentialism) derives from a conception of human nature, that universal facts about it provide the required perfectionist standard. The goal of human lives is to realize the potentialities inherent in human nature, and nature dictates a way of life toward which we naturally strive, if we are not blocked by social arrangements or individual pathology. A standard example is Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* comment –

“For man ....the life according to reason is the best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else *is* man. This life therefore is also the happiest”. (NE 1178a)

The *summum bonum* is life according to reason ; development consists in approximating it ; perfection is its attainment. But the latter may be *open or closed*. Aristotle's 'reason' and ensuing 'eudaimonism' are open to a 'dominant end' or 'inclusive end' interpretation, the former being one-dimensional and closed, and the latter being multi-dimensional and open (Bostock 2000, pp 21-5).

For the subjectivist (emotivist, existentialist, postmodernist) there are no such, or any, grounds for justifying good lives. But this goes too far. As Kekes points out (1989, p205), we cannot infer from 'human nature' what lives are good, but we can infer from it what lives cannot be good. In so far as humans are 'natural' beings, there are certain conditions all lives must meet, if they are to be regarded as being even subjectively good. Since these conditions are independent of what anyone believes, and since they apply to all human lives, they are objective. There are certain things all normal humans will want to avoid, because they are harmful – violations of the conditions for living good lives.

The anti-perfectionist tends to draw perfectionist 'human nature' as an essentialist caricature, and any position which relates to the '*natural*' is then deemed guilty by association. The 'species powers and capacities' referred to in Chapter 4, and the generic and individual concept of self-realization discussed above, refer to 'natural' capacities and potentials that contribute to a good life. But they are not the blueprint and hard wiring suggested in any hard line perfectionist picture – the full content of good lives cannot be specified in advance. Their development requires a process of individual self-making and self-determination – and the latter is open-ended, and the 'natural' is also interwoven with, and constrained and enabled, by the individual and the social. If perfectionism entails an essentialist, hard wired, and closed conception of the 'natural', and hence of the good, then it must be rejected. But the view that they do hold such a view is perhaps as much an expression of subjectivist assumptions or wishful thinking then it is of any actual 'perfectionist' view.

We can agree with perfectionism about there being some requirements all good lives must meet no matter what forms they take . Part of 'human nature', set by the natural, the social, and the individual, is constant and universal. But other parts can be transformed. Lives differ because the relation between the natural, social, and

individual is different in each life, and always entails a greater or lesser effort in self-creation. Thus, the full content of good lives cannot be specified in advance. If there were an essentialist summum bonum then life would be instrumental to a predetermined end, the blueprint for all good lives. But if the summum bonum was precisely our open endedness and creativity then it seems to elude the 'perfectionism' charge.

## **SELF-REALIZATION AS SELF-ACTUALIZATION.**

We touched above on the view of self-realization as '*self-actualization*' : that the self to begin with is already present as a set of determinate potentialities that await actualization – the potentialities are determinate even if the actuality is not. This view, rightly or wrongly, has been associated by its critics with Humanistic Psychology and theorists such as Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1970). Humanistic psychology is about change and growth, about the realization of human potential and capacities, about –

“becoming more of an origin and less of a pawn”. (Rowan 1988, p19),

but it has tended to express this in '*self-actualization*' terminology, what Rogers calls the 'actualizing tendency' : the tendency in all forms of organic life towards more complex organization, the fulfilment of potential and, in humans, the actualisation of the self. All living things are *motivated* to realize their own potential, to make actual what is potential. But this process is brought about – enabled or constrained - by *social* rather than biological forces. For example, in Maslow's famous 'hierarchy of needs' 'self-actualization' is an ultimate goal preceded by the importance of needs for belonging, love, and relationships. In principle it is not that dis-similar to MacPherson's 'developmental power', but has inevitably been subject to extensive critique precisely because of the essentialist connotations of the 'actualizing tendency'. Rogers compounds this difficulty by references to the 'organism' – 'the totality of experience, the sum of everything which is going on in the individual at a given moment' – but nevertheless a misleading term. Richards, a strong critic of humanistic psychology, concedes –

“The main thrust of both Rogers' and Maslow's theorising is not literally toward the organism but rather toward the interpersonal domain and what

might be loosely termed the 'existential' – towards concern with certain questions of choice and agency in everyday life". (Richards 1989)

and he accepts that humanistic psychology is in "self-conscious opposition to reductive biologizing". As De Carvalho agrees –

"the process of becoming was never simply a matter of genetics, biology .....they were extremely careful not to revert to biological reductionism" (1990, p 38-9).

Nevertheless, the problem with an '*actualisation of potentialities*' approach is that it is conceived of as being similar to the growth of animals or plants, a kind of semi-automatic process, an internally driven development, in which latent capacities are unfolded and brought to maturity, unless blocked by environmental and social circumstances. For *each individual* what is realized is a specific and distinctive 'essence', such that each individual can only realize herself in one way.

### **SELF-REALIZATION AS CREATIVE.**

In contrast to an 'actualization' version, I would argue that self-realization is a more reflexive process, more creative and self-determining, involving a reflexive mix of self discovery, self-definition, and self-creation. In this respect, self-determination and self-realization are interwoven. The self will often be indeterminate in its potentialities as well as in its actuality - the potentialities are real powers, but their contents are diffuse and indeterminate. Self realization thereby leaves more room for creativity than does self-actualization : in realizing oneself one creates oneself, in that one creates both ones powers (by giving them determinate form) as well as ones developed states or activities. This development is shaped by ones aspirations, which help to mould one's implicit powers as well as the ends to which they are directed. Whereas for self-actualization the 'actualization' can seem to be automatic, in self-realization the process is marked more by choices made by the person – reflexively choosing which of ones indeterminate potentialities to develop in the light of their relative strengths, ones aspirations, and ones opportunities and context. Thus self-determination is an important component of self-realization as against self-actualization, and is marked by choice, creativity, and capacity development. In



terms of the contrasts suggested earlier between potentialities that, in suitable conditions, either emerge *spontaneously*, or have to be *discovered and developed* or, thirdly, have to be *creatively and reflexively* worked upon, then elements of all three seem likely to be at work to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, '*self-realization*' might be as much a matter of making or constituting myself as it is of actualising and affirming a pre-given self. This is a view of self-realization as praxis.

### **Praxis.**

The concept of 'praxis' is of Greek origin, and according to Lobkowitz (1967, p9) 'refers to almost any kind of *activity* which a *free* man is likely to perform'. Praxis is what differentiates humans from animals and refers in general to action, activity. But, to have such significance, the activity must be of a particular kind : *self-activity*, which combines the notions of free/self-determined activity with that of *creative* (self-realizing) activity, action which uses the powers and realizes the potentialities of humans (Peffer 1990, p58, and passim). For Marx it is *praxis* rather than pure rational thought which is the characteristic human activity. Thinking and reason are intertwined with everything that humans do, an integral part of the active life, of the practice / praxis of an active purposeful being. (see Jaggar 1983, pp56-7 ; Kitching 1988, pp26-7).

This notion of praxis is also apparent in Aristotle and Spinoza, etc. From the nature of humans Aristotle deduces the norm that 'virtue' (excellence) is '*activity*', by which he means the exercise of the functions and capacities peculiar to humans (Aristotle *NE* 1102a). *Eudaimonia* (well-being or flourishing) is the result of such activity and use. The good man for Aristotle is the man who by his activity, under the guidance of his reason, brings to life the potentialities that are specific to humans (*NE* 1098/32). Similarly, in his *Ethics*, Spinoza distinguishes between activity and passivity as the two fundamental aspects of the mind's operation, reason being inseparable from activity. The first requirement for *acting* is that an action follows from our 'nature' –

"I say that we act when anything is done, either within us or without us, of which we are the adequate cause.....On the other hand I say that we suffer

(are passive) when anything is done within us .....of which we are not the cause except partially". (Spinoza, Ethics, 3, def 2)

Spinoza comments, "By virtue and power I understand the same thing" : virtue is identical with the use of man's powers, the unfolding of his potentialities, as vice is his failure to use his power. In the general sense, virtue is capacity ; in the particular sense it is human capacity, the power to be human, and to aspire to virtue means to try not to be unworthy of what humanity has made us, individually and collectively. (Spinoza Ethics IV, def 8)

Much of this approach is summed up by Erich Fromm (1949,1976, passim), in his notion of '*productive character*' and his contrast between '*having*' and '*being*'. For Fromm 'passivity' and 'activity' correspond to alienated and non-alienated. In non-alienated activity I experience myself as the subject of my activity ; it is a process of giving birth to something, of 'producing' something and remaining related to what I produce. This also implies that my activity is a manifestation of my powers, that I and my activity are one. Such non-alienated activity is 'productive activity'. This does not in itself refer to the capacity to create something new or original, nor to the product of the activity, but to its *quality* : productive activity denotes a state of inner activity, the use and development of one's faculties. In contrast, in alienated activity I do not experience myself as the acting subject of my activity ; rather, I experience the outcome of my activity – and that as something separated from me. In alienated activity *I* do not really *act* : I am *acted upon* by external forces. For Fromm, 'productiveness' is the ability of humans to use their powers and to realize the potentialities characteristic of them – which also entails that they must be free and not dependent on someone who controls their powers ; but also that they are guided by reason since they can make use of their powers only if they know what they are, how to use them, and what to use them for. 'Productiveness' means that the person experiences himself as the embodiment of his powers – that he feels himself one with his powers and at the same time that they are not masked and alienated from him.

Praxis is central to Marx's ontological assumptions – the belief that human activity, labour, creation, production is the mediator between both humans and nature and humans and society. When Marx speaks of 'production' in his earlier works he is not

referring only to material production but using it in the sense of 'praxis' : humans are creative producers of their livelihoods, of material objects, but also of ideas, social institutions, of values, and language, etc. Marx's praxis refers to the free, creative, and self-creative activity through which humans make / produce, shape, and change their world and themselves. What makes humans human, their 'species being', is their capacity for conscious creative activity. Through such activity they both transform inanimate nature and they create and transform their own nature. Moreover, since this conscious creative activity is natural to humans they do not need any physical compulsion to do it, and unlike other animals they will create and produce even when their basic material needs are satisfied, and only truly produce in freedom from such need. But when the means of production are privately owned then human creativity takes 'alienated' forms. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx as a rule opposes 'labour' to 'praxis' and explicitly describes labour as 'the act of alienation of practical human activity, but his usage is not always consistent and at times 'labour' and 'praxis' are used interchangeably. In the *German Ideology* he insists on the opposition between labour and what he previously called praxis, and upholds the view that all labour is a self-alienated form of human productive activity and should be abolished. The non-alienated form of human activity, previously called praxis, is now called 'self-activity', but the fundamental idea remains the same throughout his later work : the transformation of labour into self-activity. This hybrid concept of self-activity combines the notions of free/self-determined activity with that of creative (self-realizing) activity. We return to this below on authenticity, but also in the discussion of 'internal goods' in the following Chapter.

### **Conclusion on Conception of Self Realization.**

So what is being suggested here is that self-realization is far more complex than the simplistic or summary idea usually associated with it – the realization or *actualization* of a 'pre-given self'. There is no inflexible nature, or easily identifiable essence, to be found : that is the point of the Greek creation myth referred to in Chapter 2. Humans are incomplete, a bundle of potentials, but equipped with a generalised capacity to create and equipped with the means to do so. What is 'pre-

given' are the raw materials, the capacities and potentials to work with, from which a self is made, but the process of making has to be undertaken and this combines elements of the natural, social, and individual, and self-determination must be integral to it if it is a process of *self-making*, of *self-activity*. As such, individuality's conception of self-realization would derive from the points itemised previously on pages 160-63. The generic and individual *concept* of self-realization identifies the raw materials to work with, summarised in MacPherson's notion of 'developmental power'. But the self remains to be *made*, and is unlikely to be realized without incorporating elements of those features discussed above under '*conceptions* of self-realization' : that the social is an inseparable part of the natural and the individual, and therefore of the process of self-realization ; that there is no self-realization without self-determination, and that the process is one of discovery, development, and creativity rather than spontaneous emergence / actualisation ; and that self-knowledge is integral to this process of self-discovery, definition, and creation. As such. Any traditional essentialist view of self-realization is rejected.

## **THE CRITIQUE OF SELF-REALIZATION.**

Critiques of self-realization (e.g. see Mobasser, 1987) are far more plentiful than are elaborations of what exactly the concept means, and we need to review some of these as a means of clarifying the concept. A curious feature of some of these critiques is their implicit background tendency to base their conception of self-realization or its consequences on a model of liberal-individualist societies, but minus ethical or moral autonomy (see for example Kekes 1989, Elster 1985, *passim*).

### **1. Which potentials to Realize ?**

Should people seek to develop a wide range of potentials and / or engage in a wide variety of different activities and projects, thereby sacrificing depth to breadth, or should they do the opposite ? Are depth and breadth necessarily opposites, rather than one informing the other ?

A more important question is : should individuals realize themselves by performing only those activities that accord with their 'nature' and that are essentially human ? If so, as Archard comments –



“there is no non-evaluative, no non-question begging means of agreeing upon that nature or essence”. (Archard 1987, p20).

But perhaps that is the point and the issue, as suggested earlier. There is no inflexible nature, or easily identifiable essence, to be found : that is the point of the Greek creation myth referred to in Chapter 2. Humans are incomplete, a bundle of potentials, but equipped with a generalised capacity to create and equipped with the means to do so.

Kai Nielson (1973, p23) points out that there is no one capacity or one small set of capacities that is distinctively human -

“Suppose we mean by ‘realizing yourself’ ....to develop those capacities which are distinctive of homo sapiens.....(but) ....there are many things which are peculiar to man. Even *if* being able to reason .....is distinctive of the human animal, so is having guilt feelings, the capacity for anguish and alienation, to drive automobiles, to slaughter one’s fellow human beings with complicated weapons, etc. There are a multitude of things which are distinctive of man”.

This seems odd, as all of his examples are in some way or another tied to reason. Some capacities or features will be more significant or fundamental than others and presumably the role of a social theorist is to attempt to identify these. A ‘fundamental’ capacity would be one whose fulfilment is a precondition for the fulfilment of other capacities. But self-realization presupposes a more basic criterion by which human capacities can be judged as worthy or unworthy of being realized. Peffer (1990, p104) suggests that for humans this *might* be the capacity for self-determination, but that breathing and rationality are also fundamental, so singling out self-determination suggests that an evaluation is being made. An attempt was made to establish a more basic criterion, in Chapters 2 and 3 : the inviolability thesis arising from the incompleteness of humans, combined with the ontology of humans as creators and producers, grounds the subsequent emphasis on self-determination and self-realization as being fundamental. The capacity for reason is integral to that. The capacity for breathing is not, because it is a fixed and complete physiological reflex and a given.

The short answer to the question is that we should develop and realize those capacities or abilities which contribute the most to the achievement of our



fundamental goals, which enable us to engage in praxis or '*self-activity*' : our creativity, reason, and sociality, and doing this in a *self-determined* way. Potentially, this would doubtless entail developing most of those capacities and potentials listed above under the concept of self-realization.

## **2. What About Evil Potentials ?**

It would be nice to suppose that our potentialities are always positives - talents, virtues, and excellences. But they may not be : our potentialities might also be weaknesses, self-indulgence, vices, and destructive life diminishing dispositions (Mobasser, 1987 p23, Kekes 1989, p117-8), and it is the risk or probability of these that prevents some critics from taking self-realization seriously. There is at times the sense, particularly within varieties of conservatism, that self-realization would resemble the unleashing of some Id driven primeval beast. The pessimists, and conservatives, position tends generally to naturalise and individualise evil : *unchangeable* natural human traits and tendencies are the source, and so self-realization is a threat.

But it should be clear that there is no necessity for this : humans have many potentialities, not all of which could or should be developed. The natural, social, and individual can all, singly or collectively, create or contribute to cruelty, and there seems no reason to conclude from any specific cases that the causes have been due to unleashed natural potentials in isolation from any other influences. Individuals, groups, cultures, and social structures can all have potentialities for harm and evil. The issue is whether we allow them, and this depends on how we define them and whether we are able to perceive them. Evil takes banal and everyday forms, and is probably at its worst precisely when it blocks people's opportunities to realize their capacities and potentials, in structural and cultural forms that are simply taken for granted.

For individuality, the starting point for dealing with evil, from whatever source, is the individual inviolability and ethical autonomy discussed in Chapter 2. Within that context, enabling people to self realize seems as likely to undermine evil as it does to foster it.

### 3. Is Self-Realization Anti-Social ?

There are related, but different, aspects to this issue -

- (a) One standard view is that self-realization is an *egoistic* theory that emphasises individual aspirations. It is therefore oblivious to possible conflicts between one's own interests and those of others, each of whom is pursuing their own self-realization, and the concept gives us no criteria for resolving such conflicts. Thus, self-realization cannot in itself account for considerations of justice. (Peffer, op cit 104).
- (b) Self-realization directs attention *inward*, risks being *narcissistic*, emphasises personal judgement over conformity to custom, pits us against society, and sees society and State as an obstacle. (Kekes, op cit 119).
- (c) That there is a conflict between the principles of individual self-realization and the value of community (Elster 1985, p523; Lukes 1985, p96; Archard 1987 passim).

There is a tendency in some of these critiques to pose unrealistic either / or alternatives ; or to analyse the relationship between the social/community and self-realization by transplanting the latter into a contemporary liberal / capitalist context. The result is that self-realization inevitably becomes a threat to 'moral autonomy' and justice : self-realizing individuality is interpreted as '*self-interestedness*', which then conflicts with and erodes community. But others envisage an intrinsic tension between self-realization and community in any society, though for similar reasons. Thus, for example, Elster envisages a conflict in Marx's communist society of self-realizers because the latter are *self-interested*, whereas the communist community is thought to be characterised by a *harmony of interests*, a perceived contradiction that Archard seeks to resolve. For Marx, self-realization and community were inseparable : you had to have one to have the other (see Peffer passim). But this debate is beyond our immediate concerns here, and will be discussed in Chapter 8.

But a society that took self-realization seriously would be quite different to the society we currently know – structurally, culturally, and morally. Self-realization and self-determination cannot be envisaged in any social context without individual *inviolability* and *ethical autonomy* being prioritised. O'Meara captures the point –

“ if one individual does not value the rationality and freedom of every human self, then there is nothing illogical about another individual not valuing the rationality and freedom of the first individual. If the first individual can treat a second individual simply as a thing, as that which has mere relative worth, as that which has a price, there is nothing illogical about the second treating the first in the same way. So the only way in which human selves can have dignity, a value which is beyond price, a value of being worthwhile for their own sake, is through the universal or moral valuation of every human person as worthwhile for that person's own sake. So if the deepest human need in an individual is for self-realization, that is, for the development of the value of the self-consciousness and self-choice as worthwhile for their own sake, then this deepest need is also the need for other persons as valuable for their own sake in their own self-consciousness and self-choice. For an individual cannot logically value oneself as beyond price unless one also values all other human selves in the same manner”. (O’Meara, 2001, p4).

The problem for liberals is that they feel such mutual valuing is already a feature of liberal societies because of their emphasis on ‘moral autonomy’ and related values. But, for reasons argued in Chapters 2 and 3, it is absent because its necessary roots in inviolability and ethical autonomy have never developed. And points 3a, b, c, above all arise from that absence.

#### **4. Would Self-Realization Make Us Happy ?**

Is there reason to conclude that in realizing our potentials, developing our capacities, we would thereby be any happier or better off ? This is the subject of the next Chapter.

#### **5. Could Self-Realization be Paternalistic or Totalitarian ?**

An enormously influential critique of a *specific conception* of self-realization is that of Isaiah Berlin, though it is one that seems to be used as an argument against self-realization in general. Berlin’s contention, a case of essentialism and discovery, is that ‘self-realization’ is too tied up with ideas about metaphysical ‘*real selves*’ that are separate from actual *empirical selves* and what the latter would choose (Berlin 1969, pp141-4). All such conceptions typically base themselves on an account of the human ‘*essence*’ and of the most self-realizing, authentic, or fulfilling way that all humans can live. There is therefore also a second shift from the individual to the collectivity : the self to be realized is no longer the individual but some social whole

which embodies the 'real self' – a State, Party, Class, Race, Church, Nation, or Culture, etc – submission to the authority of which being liberating. Such a 'real selves' position could therefore be used to justify the forcible imposition of one form of life over the alternative erroneous forms chosen by people's 'false selves', and so for Berlin the concept has paternalistic or totalitarian implications, and he sees the latter tendency as being at the heart of all political theories of self-realization. He wants to leave the formulation of the good life with the individual and a plurality of choices.

There is every reason to be sympathetic to Berlin's argument. It would be difficult to imagine circumstances less conducive to individuality than his scenario, but it is important to recognize it as a critique of a specific *conception* of self realization and not of the concept itself. As Lukes (1973, p56) comments, 'all ideas can be put to evil uses', and Berlin's ominous progression from self-realization to totalitarianism is not a logically compelling one.

However, Berlin's preferred option - leaving the formulation of the good life with the individual and a plurality of choices – is not without its own problems. Presumably it was the latter that led to Berlin's totalitarian scenario in the first place ? As we saw in Chapter 3, liberal assumptions about the sovereignty of individual preferences do in general neglect the '*endogeneity of preferences*', that preferences and choice are largely pre-empted by the social and cultural environment in which people have developed. Endogenously emerging preferences might well lead to choices whose outcome is also unwanted and avoidable.

Individual choices are inevitably shaped by the natural and the social - autonomous choice can never be a pure choice, but must rely on something particular that is already given to the self and not initially chosen, must be concerned to at least some minimal degree with the discovery of one's deepest predispositions or commitments and expressing these in our choices – thus the link with self-realization. Dismissing self-realization in general, because of the experience of one specific conception of it, would be too rash, and possibly not Berlin's intention. *Clearly the self-realizing life's content must respect individual autonomy and choice*, it is without value if it does not, and self-realization itself must be a pluralistic concept. But, for individuality, self-determination and self-realization are inseparably linked, and Berlin's rejection



of any such link can only be a rejection of a specific conception of self-realization rather than the concept itself.

## **Conclusion.**

The critique of self-realization raises many interesting issues, but it does suffer from not being paralleled by extensive analysis of the concept itself, which might then be subject to critique. Consequently, what is critiqued is often a particular *conception* of self-realization, or a crude naturalistic or essentialist version of the concept. But it also suffers from being viewed within a liberal-individualist paradigm : firstly, because the latter sees self-realization as a particular conception of the good that individuals are free to pursue as they choose in liberal societies ; secondly, because self-realization has certain preconditions that are generally weak in liberal societies – inviolability and ethical autonomy ; thirdly, because liberals tend to see self-realization as a form of intensified ‘self-interestedness’ that would threaten liberal moral autonomy; and fourthly, because self-realization tends to be seen as a perfectionist conception of the good and therefore at odds with liberal autonomy.

The second part of this Chapter is concerned with authenticity, a concept closer to liberal hearts.

## **AUTHENTICITY.**

There is a link between self-realization and authenticity, and for many theorists the concepts are used interchangeably, or authenticity is viewed as the modern replacement concept for self-realization. As Kekes (1989, p117) puts it –

“self-realization, or ... authenticity as we now tend to refer to it”

and Axel Honneth (2004, p13, 2004, *passim*) seems to use self-realization, actualisation, and authenticity as synonyms. Similarly, liberal theorists of autonomy frequently use authenticity as the standard by which to distinguish basic autonomy from ideal autonomy, whilst most other theorists clearly demarcate autonomy and authenticity (Ferrara 1998, p15; Larmore, 2004, p 5-9).



This inter-changeability of concepts appears confused, and confusing. As touched on in Chapter 3, liberal theorists tend to merge authenticity into autonomy, thereby adapting its meaning and reducing authenticity to a contributory role in the individual's choice of a conception of the good. Using authenticity as a synonym for self-realization or self-actualization risks having the same effect : liberal 'autonomy' becomes a catch all category for all these concepts so that their independent meaning, and different political implications, are emasculated.

So our concerns here are : what does authenticity mean, and does this add anything to self-realization that has not already been touched on in the previous section ? And, how is it relevant to individuality ?

The authentic is the real and the genuine as opposed to the fake or artificial. As such it can be applied to anything - the self, others, relationships, practices, products, values, community, the world, etc. In relation to individuals, authenticity is universally used to refer to some sense of –

*'to thine own self be true'.*

and, on reflection, this is sufficiently open-ended to offend no one, including post-modernists. But to give a taste of its ensuing diverse possibilities we should quote Shakespeare more fully –

*" This above all : to thine own self be true. And it doth follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man". (Shakespeare, 'Hamlet').*

This has a number of possible meanings which reflect the history of the concept –

(1) be true to self *in order thereby* to be true to others. Guignon (2004, p26) sees this as the original, and Shakespeare's, sense of authenticity, and it is really the virtue of *sincerity*.

(2) be true to self, because being so is regarded as being valuable *in its own right*.

Guignon regards this as the modern sense of authenticity.

Individuality would create a third option –

(3) be true to self, because being so is regarded as being valuable in its own right, and enables us to be true to others. This is ethical autonomy as a base for moral autonomy.

Option (1) *risks* being incomprehensible, instrumental and hollow, inauthentic role-playing and image-management. Option (2) is an excellent starting point, but has the danger indicated below. Option (3) fully relates to the inviolability, ethical autonomy, and moral autonomy linkage that forms a basis of individuality, whereas Options (1) and (2) do not. As Selznick comments –

“We cannot value ourselves – cannot preserve our own integrity – if we do not value others. And to value others we must cut through the pretense and artificiality of everyday life”. (1992, p71).

Selznick seems to be referring here to authenticity. But this view seems to be at odds with standard interpretations of authenticity, which tend to be based upon Option (2).

For example, as Reisert poses the question –

“Can the demands of authenticity and the requirements of justice be reconciled ....can authenticity be embraced as a moral ideal without unacceptably relaxing the stringency of obligations to others or undermining the liberal ideal of equal treatment for all ? The answer would seem to be no. Justice and authenticity pull in opposite directions : authenticity calls one to a life of self-discovery, self-realization, and self-fulfillment ; justice demands respect for the claims of others”. (Reisert, 2000, p1).

In liberal-individualist societies authenticity is perceived as a form of self-interestedness and therefore a threat to moral autonomy and justice. This issue has been dealt with in previous Chapters and the previous section, and will be returned to below and in Chapter 7.

## **WHAT IS AUTHENTICITY ?**

Authenticity is a much explored concept, from diverse standpoints, and there are many sides to it that we are unable to consider here. In effect we touched on its source early in Chapter 2 with reference to Erich Fromm’s ‘*existential dichotomies*’ that are characteristic of humans. There is then a whole subsequent dialogue concerned with self-realization/alienation on the one hand and authenticity/inauthenticity on the other, and the relationship between these concepts, particularly as conceived respectively by Marxists and Existentialists. Our concerns here are more specific and mundane.

In Chapter 3 we concluded that the concept of autonomy has to be tied to something else that is given to and unchosen by the self. In Chapter 4 we explored this in terms of the relationship between the natural, the social, and the individual, and in the previous section of this Chapter have looked at the 'unchosen' in terms of the realization of potentialities. If self-determination and autonomy requires a touchstone, a criterion or standard by which judgement is made, then one such standard is 'authenticity' - 'being true to oneself'. In simple terms the self-realization / authenticity relation would then be : the realization of a self, its potentialities, to then be true to ; if self-realization is an active process of ongoing self-making then authenticity is being committed to that process. But we need to explore this.

Authenticity seems to convey the implication read into it by its critics that the self possesses an essential core, an essential human nature or true self located in each person that provides a standard against which the authenticity of our actions/feelings/thoughts can be assessed. To be authentic is to follow this true/essential self and the latter is thought to determine what is good for the self in matters of social interaction without being itself determined by such interaction. This essential core would function as the source of all normativity while itself being just a brute fact. Such a view gives the impression that if authenticity refers to an *inwardly generated 'true self'* then it *must exclude the 'social'*, presumably because the social is perceived as *external* to the self. But there is no necessary reason why this 'core' must be, or can be, seen as being 'natural' rather than social in its nature or origin, and any version of authenticity must inevitably recognize the inter-relation between the natural, social, and individual..

In its Greek origin authenticity simply refers to individuals who 'posit themselves', 'set themselves as a thesis' or, 'one who does anything with his own hand', which more closely resembles self-determination and might be called '*authentic autonomy*'. Yet another version of authenticity is concerned with the self as a complex entity of different parts, where authenticity consists of a coherence, harmony, integrity, and unity, of all parts, building and maintaining a self- identity. Authenticity in this sense becomes a project and goal of creating *narrative unity*, what might be called *authenticity as coherence*.

So there are significantly different ways of interpreting authenticity and I want to briefly look at five of these -

Authentic Autonomy,  
Existentialism / Will and Commitment,  
Essentialist Authenticity,  
Authenticity as Coherence.  
Narrative Authenticity.

We then look at an important feature of authenticity, the contrast between *instrumental and expressive reflexivity*, before looking at a sixth model –

Self-Realizing Authenticity.

### **Authentic Autonomy**

This makes authenticity no more than an elaboration of personal autonomy, as Larmore neatly summarises –

“Being truly ourselves is a matter not of being different from others but of ceasing to guide ourselves by others”. (Larmore 1996, p91).

As such, authenticity becomes the litmus test and guarantor of personal autonomy. For example, Christman describes personal autonomy as –

“ a conception of the person able to act, reflect, and choose on the basis of factors that are somehow her own (authentic in some sense)”.

All such versions of autonomy make it dependent on two conditions : the authenticity condition - the independence of one's deliberation and choice from manipulation by others, the capacity to reflect upon and endorse one's desires and values, so that one is not alienated from aspects of oneself. etc ; and the competency condition – the capacity to rule oneself, via rational thought, self-control, freedom from systematic self-deception, etc. The meaning of authenticity seems to be the capacity to ensure that one's desires and values are in some sense one's own - reflect upon and identify with one's motives, desires, and values, believe they make sense in terms of long-term commitments and plans, and can thereby endorse them – a reflective self-endorsement. This requires the ability to distance oneself from one's desires,

attitudes, and values, which presumably simultaneously demands that one breaks the hold of all external impositions, 'society and its laws of conformity', and decide for oneself alone.

None of this takes us in any clear way beyond personal autonomy, though clearly it involves the development and use of human power and capacities as in the generic concept of self-realization. We have looked at the problems of this approach previously. Essentially it takes us from *basic autonomy (agency)* to *personal autonomy*, but it leaves the 'unchosen' unspecified. As Ferrara puts it -

"there is no way of generating the notion of authenticity from within the perspective of autonomy alone. Some additional content is needed.....(though) authenticity presupposes autonomy". (Ferrara 1998, p51)

But an additional problem with all the 'Authentic Autonomy' interpretations have in common is an overly *rationalistic approach* to authenticity, and we explore this point further below.

### **Existentialist Authenticity : Will and Commitment.**

Whilst humans have needs, drives, and desires, and these influence us, they merely set the conditions in which we must choose, they do not predetermine choices. Choice replaces instinct ; will and commitment replace drives. There is no 'human nature' – 'existence precedes essence', etc. The existential self has no predetermined essence to be realized, it must determine and create itself. The one universal and essential characteristic of humans is their freedom, we are 'condemned to be free' in Sartre's phrase – our freedom to choose is absolute and exists in all conditions and all situations – and to pretend otherwise is an act of '*bad faith*'. When we avoid the latter, and accept the responsibility for choices, and accept the anxiety this brings, we are acting authentically. However, as suggested in Chapter 4, this position does seem to assume an ontology, a view of humans as 'creators and doers'. Sayers (1999, p4) regards this existentialist view as an *essentialist* account because it portrays just one aspect of the self – will, choice, and commitment – as essential ; needs, drives,



desires, etc, and the 'social' are, in this sense, *external* to the self. The result is a simplistic and one-dimensional picture of human psychology.

### **Essentialist Authenticity.**

In contrast to the previous model there is an essential human nature or true self located in each individual, in our *individual* instincts, needs / drives, and desires. To be true to ourselves these must be asserted in defiance of social convention and other external demands. The core self defines or demarcates what one is as a 'unique' person, as having a certain identity, and that one is conscious of this core self and the demands it makes on one to live up to it, and that these demands are the proper objects of ones aspirations. Versions of this approach might be found in simple instinct theory, hedonistic pleasure seeking/pain avoiding theories, or varieties of Freudianism. Such views fail precisely because they are one-sided, exclusively naturalistic, seeing the 'social' as external to the self. But also because their view of the 'natural' itself seems flawed, too instinctually 'hard-wired' and pre-programmed.

### **Authenticity as Coherence.**

This position is found in a wide range of theories and theorists – Aristotle, psychoanalysis, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, narrative theorists, etc (Meyers 1989; Ferrara 1998; Sayers 1999). Being authentic does not consist in correspondence to a pre-given essence. The self is a complex entity of different parts, natural, social, and individual, in a variety of forms. Authenticity consists in creating coherence, harmony, integrity, and unity amongst these different components of the self – which entails acknowledging and accepting all parts. As J.S.Mill seems to express it –

“the end of man, or that which is prescribed by .... reason ....is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole”. (Mill 1991, p145).

Authenticity is a matter of coherence – holding together the parts as components of a whole. For example, Ferrara (1998, p80-107) identifies within the psychoanalytic tradition a broad convergence on the salience of four dimensions of the well-being of

an individual identity : coherence, vitality, depth, and maturity, though each has many sub-dimensions, and he uses these to develop a conception of authenticity as coherence.

Being authentic thus involves commitment, self discipline, and self control, an enduring commitment to a particular way of life which must be sustained against countervailing pressures from within and without – building and maintaining a self-identity. Authenticity is therefore a project, a *narrative quest*, with the goal of *narrative unity*, as both MacIntyre and Taylor have described it (Mulhall and Swift 1992, p 86, 114). This idea of psychic integration can be put forward as a radical ideal that is systematically thwarted by the conditions of modern life due to conflicting interests.

*Postmodernists* would reject this idea of the integration of the self, the latter being a mere construct, inherently multiple and fragmentary. Unity and integration are not natural or inherent to the self, but illusions and external impositions, and have the effect of limiting and impoverishing the self (Frosh 1991 *passim*). We should accept the multiplicity of the self, revel in its fragmentation and celebrate its diversity, as a route to ‘authenticity’.

### **Narrative Authenticity.**

In past 20 years or more there has been an increasing interest in ‘narrative’ across a range of disciplines. ‘Narrativist’ conceptions of the self and authenticity bear some resemblance to the coherence model, but seem more circumscribed. (Stephenson 1999; MacIntyre 1985; Taylor 1989, 1992; Lyotard 1984; Rorty 1989; Nussbaum 1990).

In the narrative conception the self is socially constituted, but we have an ability to shape an identity for ourselves by taking over those social interpretations in our active lives and knitting them together into a unique life story. Our personal identity is the continuous, ongoing, open-ended activity of living out a story over the course of time, and this narrative continuity and unity defines the ‘I’. We are embedded in a wider shared context of meanings that we do not create. But we use the ‘social’ as our raw material to compose an identity, and it is up to each of us to make something of ourselves in what we do. So the self is something we do, not something we find –

we are self-making/self-fashioning beings. *What matters* is taking ownership of your life story by making it your own. But in deciding what sort of life, what sort of style, you should produce, there are no standards of good or bad. There are innumerable ways we might constitute ourselves in imparting a narrative shape to our lives, but there are neither inner or outer criteria that tell us whether our life story is really worth living -

“The narrativist conception of authentic existence can leave us with a sense of the absolute contingency of all life stories. For if any story can be mine, then no story is really mine.....we can begin to sense the utter groundlessness of any attempt at self-formation....the entire idea of owning my life begins to look suspect. Where there are no guidelines or directives for taking hold of my life, the claim that I own my life begins to look vacuous”. (Guignon 2004, p142-3).

The above seems to be a sort of liberal or existentialist version of the narrative conception. A more communitarian version of a narrative understanding of the self suggests that answers to questions about what we ought to do involve not merely choosing what to do as individuals but also, and essentially, discovering who we are in relation to others. To understand what it is that I ought to do I must recognize that the story of my life possesses a certain narrative structure in which what I am now is continuous with what I was in the past. Thus the search for what I am , and for what I ought to do, is indeed a search and not simply a set of decisions. It is this search, this quest, which is essential to the unity of a person’s life. Questions about the good life do not require us to make a judgement about what sort of person we wish to be , but rather to discover who we already are : not ‘what should I be, what sort of life should I lead ?’, but ‘who am I ?’ - a process of discovery, not choice. But any such search must simultaneously be self-discovery *and* self-definition. To ask ‘who am I’ without simultaneously asking ‘and who do I want to be’ suggests that the ‘search’ is incomplete and emasculated too narrowly social, focussing on the way in which our identity is shaped with and by others, in exclusion from the natural and individual, and thereby feels one-sided. MacIntyre’s pursuit of ‘narrative unity’/integrity is a version of the ‘authenticity as coherence’ model, though MacIntyre would reject the notion of authenticity. Taylor’s approach is what I would call a ‘social’ model of authenticity, and we look at it later in the Chapter.

## **Instrumental and Expressive Reflexivity.**

Regarding the above varieties of authenticity, one key question would concern the process of becoming or being authentic – how this is done. We referred previously to the processes of self-discovery and self-definition, and whether for example potentialities, etc, spontaneously emerge, or have to be discovered and developed, or have to be made manifest by being *creatively and autonomously worked upon*. I also referred earlier to those conceptions of autonomy and authenticity that are overly *rationalistic*, the one-sided *reason-centred* view of subjectivity typical of the Western tradition and especially to its hierarchical structuring of subjectivity in to a higher rational component and a lower one constituted by the passions and emotions (Ferrara 1998, p 7-8). I want to explore this theme further here, because it relates to the above discussion, and to the distinction between autonomy and authenticity.

Giddens contrasts traditional societies and ‘late modernity’, where the de-traditionalisation of the latter creates an empty space that demands to be filled by either meaningless routines or by individual reflexivity – deciding actively to construct our life projects by a process of creative self-reflection (Giddens 1994, p70). But Giddens’s notion of reflexivity is what Mouzelis calls ‘over-activistic’, conceptualised in ultra-activistic, instrumental, terms –

“subjects are portrayed as constantly involved in means-ends situations, constantly trying to reflexively and rationally choose their broad goals as well as the means of their realisation; they are also constantly monitoring or revising their projects in the light of new information and of the already achieved results. Whether the chosen goal is to get rich, become famous, win friends, or improve ones sex appeal, the way in which both the goals and the means are selected entails a type of reflexivity that excludes more contemplative, more ‘easy-going’, less cognitive ways of navigating reflexively in a world full of choices and individual challenges” (Mouzelis 1999, p85)

Mouzelis wants to be able to resort to some non-compulsive reflexive attitude that does not seek (via rational choices) to actively construct life orientations, but rather allows, in an indirect and passive manner, life orientations and other broad goals to *emerge*. Instead of actively and instrumentally trying to master the complexity of growing choices, one gets rid of the tyranny of purposiveness based on calculation,

planning, and ratiocination. Such reflexivity entails the transcendence of the never ending rational setting of goals, the fulfilment of which only leads to new goals ad infinitum. It suggests that one can be profoundly reflexive without becoming engulfed by the business of incessant means-end decision-making. Mouzelis finds such a mode of reflexivity in a non-secular form in all the great mystical traditions of both East and West, but also in the psychoanalytic tradition and especially self-analysis. He calls this mode of reflexivity '*apophatic*', in contrast to Giddens' '*cataphatic*', affirmative activistic reflexivity. In the former, the subject turns away from tradition, formulaic truths, and all other extrinsic sources of goal formation, in order to focus on the self in such a way that decisions and life goals '*appear*' or '*emerge*' rather than having to be instrumentally *constructed*. (Mouzelis op cit p87). But apophatic and cataphatic self-reflexivity are ideal types and extremes on a continuum, and their appropriateness or relevance will vary according to the context and the goals to be achieved.

For convenience it might be appropriate temporarily to re-christen these two modes of reflexivity – the '*apophatic*' becoming *expressive reflexivity*, and the '*cataphatic*' becoming *instrumental reflexivity* (though the former term might not be entirely accurate). There is a parallel here with Martin Buber's (1937) distinction between a non-instrumental '*I and Thou*' relation compared to an instrumental '*I – It*' one, and this is discussed below.

There are three points I want to make in connection with all this.

- (1) Autonomy, and particularly liberal-autonomy, is characterised by a rationality and '*instrumental reflexivity*', and the danger is that because autonomy and authenticity are linked this then infects authenticity – a possibility in all the models of authenticity discussed above.
- (2) Authenticity, given what it entails, requires a more '*expressive reflexivity*', and a blend of reason and emotion, a theme developed by feminists.
- (3) '*Expressive reflexivity*' requires something resembling the conception of 'self-realizing authenticity' outlined below, something unchosen, some 'self-substance', some raw material to work with. In its absence, real or imagined, reflection is reduced to instrumental rationality.



There is a link between this expressive reflexivity and Rousseau's characteristics of authenticity : empathy, self-knowledge, capacity to accept undesired aspects of the self, a sensitivity to inner needs, and a non-repressive attitude towards ones 'inner nature', the 'voice within'. For Rousseau, authenticity is a blend of reason with emotion, so the ensuing morality is not solely the result of commitment to a reasoned principle but 'goodheartedness', a *caring* attachment to others. (Ferrara 1993, p27,48,77).

## **SELF-REALIZING AUTHENTICITY.**

All of the conceptions of authenticity discussed above, particularly the first three, have their difficulties, mostly related to their one-dimensional character, the absence of any adequate conception of a relation between the natural, social, and individual. They also, apart from essentialism, seem to lack any mechanism to make them work. The problem with the 'autonomy' and 'existential' versions is that they lack any substantive *core* other than the individual. The problem with a purely naturalistic or essentialist model, is its narrowness and spontaneous actualization / self-discovery focus – the 'true self' is a pre-social core, like a sunken treasure, to be discovered or accessed, and then acted upon. In excluding '*self-definition*' it denies any creative element to authenticity. The 'narrative' conceptions are too one-sidedly social and circumscribed, or too subjective. The exception is the 'coherence' model, but the possible (or potential) weakness here is the absence of any mechanism to it and its ensuing blandness. What I want to propose is a model of '*self-realizing authenticity*' that is close to the *coherence* model without jettisoning the *spirit* of the *existentialist* and *essentialist* models that both tend to underlie the popular view of authenticity.

If each person represents a unique combination of generic and individual dispositions, characteristics, and capacities, talents, abilities, and potentials, derived from both natural and social factors, then it seems probable that this combination will be the *unchosen starting point* of authenticity and at least inform, if not determine, its substantive content. This is the generic and individual *concept* of self-realization discussed earlier in the Chapter, summarised as MacPherson's 'developmental power'. In this view, authenticity has the quality of being somehow connected with,

and expressive of, the core of a person's personality, their uniquely personal as opposed to socially *shared* identity. If I am insensitive to my deepest needs or devise a life plan that fails to fit with who I am, then I may act autonomously but inauthentically. In this version, for an identity to be authentic it must, as Ferrara puts it –

“ not only be *autonomously* willed; it is also necessary that its project-like moment ('Who I want to be') should fit in an exemplary way its diagnostic moment ('Who I am'), where the expression 'to fit' does not mean that it depends in a mechanical way on it, but rather that a relation of mutual relevance is created or maintained between these two moments”. (Ferrara, op cit p16).

Such a conception of authenticity does assume that a life in which the deepest and most significant motifs that resonate within us find expression is a kind of 'ought' which haunts us – thus the requirement for *expressive reflexivity*. But there is no reason why such motifs underlying 'who I am' need be exclusively 'natural' as opposed to being an outcome of the interaction between the natural, social, and individual. Nor is there any reason why such motifs would necessarily be immediately self-evident or spontaneously actualising. Processes of self discovery, self creation, and self definition would all be involved, and this seems to highlight that a central aspect of authenticity would be its requirement for *self-knowledge*. To 'Know thyself' and 'Accept your destiny' is never simple : it might well be to know ones potentialities, and to live so as to realize them, but this requires self-knowledge derived from reflection on ones ongoing individual experience of the natural and the social.

As Guignon points out, in the conception of the self that we inherit from Rousseau, self-discovery is not a matter of *finding* an entity that has been there all along, but a matter of *making* the self in the course of the search. Authenticity is the *activity of self-fashioning or self-making itself*.

“We just *are* what we make of ourselves in the course of our quest for self-definition. The important thing is the creative act itself .....an unreflective immersion in ones own life, a full participation that involves the self as a feeling and acting whole....not as telling you to shape yourself according to the requirements of an antecedently given essence, but as directing you to accept that your creative activity of self-making is the ultimate source of your own being” (Guignon 2004 op cit, p69-70).

But this act of 'self-making' needs raw materials to work with. As we quoted Lichthman previously –

“the very notion of human nature as a *tabula rasa* is self contradictory. Even a blank slate must have such properties as will permit the acceptance of the chalk...”.

And the individual's 'raw materials' are those previously discussed above under the concept of self-realization, a mix of the natural, social, and individual. Without any such raw materials we end up in the post-modernist centre-less maelstrom of dispersal and multiplicity, of shifting desires, moods, transient relationships and events with *nothing* to hold them together. *With* these raw materials, the self is something we *do*, it is a (*narrative*) *quest* of creative self-making and self-fashioning within the constraints and enablements of the natural, social, and individual. The original conception of authenticity promised to give us privileged access to something deep within ourselves – a 'real me' or 'true self' - that would provide us with knowledge about how we ought to live. The 'self-realizing' model rejects this, but not the process : what *is* within me, that I do potentially have privileged access to, is my own self-making activity, the ongoing process of making or seizing on possibilities and making them my own through my own choices and decisions. This does not provide access to what the older conceptions of authenticity promised – substantive information about *who I really am* or *what sort of person I ought to be* - but these were always false promises, illusory safety blankets amidst existential despair.

What is authentic about humans is that which is definitive or characteristic of them, so that *being authentic* is living in accord with those defining features. But the latter are that there is no inflexible 'human nature', or identifiable essence, to be found : that is the point of the Greek creation myth referred to in Chapter 2. Humans are incomplete, a bundle of potentials, but equipped with a generalised capacity to create, and equipped with the means to do so. What is 'pre-given' are the raw materials, the capacities and potentials to work with, from which a self is made, but the process of making has to be undertaken, and this combines elements of the natural, social, and individual, and self-determination must be integral to it if it is to be a process of *self-making*, of *self-activity*. Being authentic is being true to this

process, acknowledging it in the life of our self, and others. Self-realization and authenticity are the concepts we use to describe this process : being ‘true to our self’ entails the realization of a self and its potentialities, and these are integral to *ethical autonomy* as a basis for moral autonomy, a theme we return to in Chapter 7.

## **Conclusion.**

Each of the versions of authenticity discussed above tells us something important about the concept. Its starting point must be self-determination. What *existential authenticity* tells us so starkly is that humans are incomplete and make themselves through choices that affect themselves and others, and that we must take responsibility for these. The *naturalistic essentialist* versions of authenticity remind us that we are natural, and not just social, beings, that we have animating potentials within us, both good and bad. But *authenticity as coherence* brings us back to the human whole, that we are natural, social, and individual beings, and that authenticity is thereby the state, or pursuit, of being *ontologically whole*. One implication of the latter is that the pursuit of authenticity entails *expressive reflexivity* and can never be simply the reason based process of *instrumental reflexivity* that underlies liberal autonomy. What I have called *self-realizing authenticity* seeks to incorporate all these elements, whilst keeping the link with self-realization clear.

One final point. At the start of this section on authenticity, I gave three interpretations of Shakespeare’s ‘*to thine own self be true*’. Option (2) was : ‘be true to self, because being so is regarded as being valuable *in its own right*’. Guignon regards this as the modern sense of authenticity, but Reisert then posed the question : can the demands of authenticity and the requirements of justice be reconciled ? My own ‘answer’ was given as Option (3) : ‘be true to self, because being so is regarded as being valuable in its own right, and enables us to be true to others’. Authenticity contributes to ethical autonomy as a base for moral autonomy. I want to explore this a bit further here, and it is subsequently relevant to Chapters 6 and 7.



## **POSITIVE 'SELF-REGARD' : BUBER, ROUSSEAU, ROGERS.**

In '*I and Thou*' Martin Buber (1937) makes a distinction between '*I – It*' relationships (the personal and the impersonal/social), and '*I – Thou*' relationships (the personal and the interpersonal).

'*I – It*' relations are based on Weber's instrumental rationality : the self responds to something extraneous to it in a manipulative, rationalising, or calculating manner. The ultimate aim of the '*I – It*' relationship is the attainment of control or domination.

By contrast, in the '*I – Thou*' relation, the 'Other' is neither reduced to an object, nor viewed as an extension of the self : there is an interpersonal mutuality in which each individual retains full autonomy while opening up to and understanding the Other's situation. For Buber it is from this undistorted communication that the ethical in particular, and meaningful life in general, emerges. The ethical emanates from an interpersonal situation where the rationalising, calculating, planning, utilitarian element (which transforms the 'Thou' into 'It') is absent. Consequently the 'I' is able to confirm the worthiness of the 'Other', and to show trust by being fully present, a non-instrumental confirmation of the other.

An *intra-personal* relation, and self-reflexivity, can take a non-instrumental '*I – I*' form, or an instrumental '*I – It*' form. Authenticity would entail an 'I–'I', rather than 'I–'It' relation. In contrast, many commercialised forms of authenticity are a case of an instrumental 'I–'It' relation, where the self is turned into a more marketable commodity.

Similarly for inter-personal relations. Although an '*I-It*' relation as a basis for an '*I – Thou*' relation cannot be excluded, it seems more plausible to establish a connection between a non-instrumental self-self relationship and a non-instrumental self-other relation, rather than vice versa. For Buber, an '*I – Thou*' relation entails treating *one's self* in a *non-instrumental*, and not '*I – It*' manner. Whether the 'object' is the self, the Other, or Nature, it is possible to relate to it in either an instrumental or non-instrumental fashion. *Treating the Other non-instrumentally entails treating oneself non-instrumentally. A pre-condition for a non-instrumental interpersonal relationship*



is the non-utilitarian, non-instrumental, relationship one has to oneself. The implication of this is that, as Buber says –

“Not before a man can say ‘I’ in perfect reality, can he in perfect reality say ‘Thou’ “. (Buber1973, 145).

But what does being able to say ‘I’ entail ? Buber’s ‘I’, whether in relation to himself or others, is not manipulative, rationalising, or calculating, his aim is not control or domination. I want to briefly look at this question in terms of Rousseau’s distinction between *amour de soi* and *amour propre*, but mostly the latter because it tells us something about what an ‘I’ is not.

Rousseau’s distinction (Berman 1970; Rousseau 1955) is central to his account of what is required for a self to become *moral*. The development of self-respect / self-worth (*amour de soi*) and the living of a moral life require not that the self be preoccupied by how he appears to others, thriving on the regard of others, but that he be self-sufficient and possess an inner unity, resilience, and wholeness, a strong unified centre which he could rightly claim was his own self-made self – his ‘true self’ in traditional usage. This was achieved by the exercise of individual will, enabling one to resist the dictates of ones passions and the opinions of others.

*Amour propre* (self-pride and self promotion, selfishness, egoism, vanity) is the sentiment of existence and self-worth had by the self of civil society – a self conception that depends upon the opinions, esteem and regard of others, a preoccupation with how one appears in their eyes, which Rousseau sees as compromising the achievement of a strong unified centre. In civil society people live ‘outside themselves’, basing their lives on what society expects of them rather than the progress of their ‘natural’ selves ; he is at the mercy of his own passions which beckon him to procure property, fame, honour, superiority, that can never properly be satisfied. Such a man can neither be free nor moral. *Amour propre* thrives in society because it is here that people compare themselves with others and want to be superior. The self’s sense of its own existence and worth depends on the recognition bestowed by others, guided by an ever changing public opinion. He thus develops a ‘false self’ – a self that is not self-determined. Such people are less affected by the plight of others and so less capable of experiencing and expressing compassion.

“Social man ...only knows how to live in the opinions of others ...he seems to receive the consciousness of his own existence merely from the judgement of others ....everything being reduced to appearances, there is but art and mummery in every honour, friendship, virtue ....we have nothing to show for ourselves but a frivolous and deceitful appearance”. (Rousseau 1955, p220)

*Amour propre* is not simply about the need for some form of recognition or praise from others, but to the social self's *dependence* on public opinion for the sense of its own worth and existence, and this is self-alienating. The self of *amour propre* is a self for whom 'seeming' is more important than being. For such a self, esteem is more important than virtue, a self incapable of morality. To become 'authentic' he must become a being that has a non comparative self conception, a self-determining being whose sense of his own existence and worth is independent of public opinion, given instead by the *determinations of his own self*. What the latter refers to is the process of self-making discussed previously.

What does Rogers say that is relevant to Buber's 'I' ?

As the self develops we experience the need for love, affection, nurturance, approval, respect, and acceptance from significant people in our environment – we have a need for *positive regard from others*. If this is forthcoming then it is internalised and we develop *positive self regard* – a sense of trust in ourselves and in the accuracy and reliability of our own inner experiencing – a sense of self-worth. It is on this that we must depend if we are to become independent of others and be able to make good choices and decisions about our life – to avoid *amour propre*. However, our significant others can withhold, or threaten to withhold, love and acceptance, and so positive self-regard is fragile and susceptible to the negative evaluations of others – *conditional positive regard*. Since the child fears the loss of positive regard he learns to behave in ways that ensure its continuation – learns to view himself as others view him. As a child develops she begins to acquire '*conditions of worth*' : she learns from experience that she is only acceptable to others as long as she thinks, feels, and behaves in ways that are positively valued by others. These are the 'conditions' of being worthy and valued – we receive what we need when we show we are 'worthy' and deserving. Over time, this conditioning leads us to have *conditional positive self-regard* – the conditions under which we

have been given approval become the conditions under which we approve of ourselves, we begin to like ourselves only if we meet the standards that others apply to us.

Viewed as a power situation this is an issue of empowerment or disempowerment, of autonomy or heteronomy, MacPherson's '*developmental power*' – the ways in which '*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*' is enabled or constrained. The exercise of power can take Buber's 'I–'Thou' form and be nurturing and developmental in ways which foster self-realization and self-determination. Or it can take the 'I–'It' form and be coercive and manipulative, rationalising and calculating, the overt or covert aim being control or domination. *Inviolability* requires the former rather than the latter, leading to positive self-regard.

Rogers describes the effects of all this in his notion of '*locus of evaluation*'. People with positive self-regard have an *internal locus of evaluation* - their 'self-esteem' does not rely on outside evaluations (amour propre), but is generated internally via reflection and deliberation on ones own value system. In contrast, those with conditional or low positive regard are more *dependent* on the evaluations of others for their feelings of acceptance and self-esteem – an *external locus of evaluation*. Seeman describes the psychologically integrated person, with an internal locus, as follows –

“They have a core sense of self which they like, respect, and trust ....At the interpersonal level, the acceptance and trust in self permits relationships which are in turn accepting, which are equalitarian rather than status oriented, which make few claims or demands on other persons, and which are positive in valence.. Because interpersonal relationships are not fraught with threat or danger, intimacy is more sustainable and enduring relationships are more possible. From the perspective of other persons, the integrated person is readily visible, liked and valued (1983, 233-5).

Rotter (1966) developed Rogers' '*locus of evaluation*' into the concept of '*locus of control*'. Those with an *internal locus of control* attribute events that happen to them to sources 'within themselves'. Objectively, this will often be entirely mistaken. But the point is that they take responsibility for what happens to them, they are proactive rather than passive : if the train breaks down *again* then they choose more reliable alternatives. Those with an *external locus of control* attribute events in their lives to

outside agencies and factors – ‘*things happen to them*’, and luck or fate play a big part – and this links with Seligman’s (1975) research on ‘learned helplessness’.

In an exhaustive review of research on locus of control, Phares (1976) demonstrated that ‘internals’ have, amongst other things : greater self-control; are less coercive when given power; accept more responsibility for their own behaviour, and see others as being more responsible for theirs; prefer activities involving skill; etc. As Phares also shows, research demonstrates clearly that internally controlled people are more likely to help others and tend to be more competent helpers. In other words, the more that people take charge of their own lives the less selfish they are likely to be. Other research findings suggest that ‘internals’ are also more committed to social and political action than externals. Thus, to return to Buber’s point –

“Not before a man can say ‘*I*’ in perfect reality.....can he in perfect reality say ‘*Thou*’ “. (Buber1973, 145).

and thus Shakespeare’s Polonius : ‘be true to self, because being so is regarded as being valuable in its own right, and enables us to be true to others’. Authenticity contributes to ethical autonomy as a base for moral autonomy

Charles Taylor has his own answer to the question, and in the next section we briefly look at his version of ‘social’ or ‘dialogical’ authenticity, before turning to J. S. Mill in more detail.

### **‘SOCIAL AUTHENTICITY’ – CHARLES TAYLOR.**

A theme of the previous Chapter was the separate and inter-related levels of the natural, the social, and the individual, and we saw that there is scope for a relative autonomy of the individual. Our focus in this Chapter has been the relationship between *individual* self-determination, *individual* self-realization, and *individual* authenticity, all of which entail an inter-relation between the natural, the social, and the individual. The reasons for the emphasis on the individual were indicated in Chapters 2 and 3. In turning to Taylor we enter a largely social world, where the ‘natural’, and individual agency, can only be understood in the context of the social.

Taylor (1991 p33-5) has a conception of what might be called ‘*social authenticity*’, which derives from the social nature of humans. For Taylor, human identities are



constituted '*dialogically*', through interaction with others. Taylor does not deny that 'natural' characteristics to some extent condition our development, and he seems to regard humans as naturally '*self-interpreting*' beings and purposive, reflexive, agents. To be a person one must first be an agent, "a being with consciousness, where consciousness is seen as a power to frame representations of things" (1985a, p98) ; an agent "who has a sense of self, of his/her own life. Who can evaluate it, and make choices about it" (op cit, p103), and this is the basis of the respect that we owe persons (1985a, p103). But his point is that we are not self-contained monads, developing wholly according to some internal programme, but that we achieve our own distinctive identities in large part through our interactions with others. We are 'self-interpreting' beings, but within a *horizon* of evaluations. Taylor's argument is premised on his view of selfhood as an ineluctable social product : identity requires social recognition and is formed out of the social matrix of community – is built '*dialogically*', within '*horizons of significance*', a '*background of intelligibility*' that is the valuation system of a historically grown community, the '*inescapable framework*' that we *discover* rather than choose – 'I must acknowledge my *belonging* before I can understand myself'. We can come to know ourselves only 'against a *communal background*'. (Taylor 1985b, pp 248-88, *passim*). '*Horizons of significance*' lie beyond the individual –

"Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands". (Taylor 1991, p41).

It's never entirely clear how Taylor makes the jump from this to 'community' : we can be a part of the social, and committed to particular ideas and values derived from the 'social', but the 'social' does not equal community, no more than does 'dialogue'.

But the relevance of this for Taylor is that because our identity is formed in 'dialogue' any attempts to achieve authenticity without regard to others is self-defeating.



Taylor rejects any notion of radical individualism/autonomy : self determining freedom, and what he regards as its moral subjectivism and soft relativism, is seen as self-defeating and self-destructive, the route to an anomic '*disengaged self*'. But he is committed to an ideal of authenticity that (a) incorporates a 'community' view of the constitution of a persons valuation system – 'community' being a conceptual prerequisite of being in true contact with oneself and, (b) retains autonomy in the forms of reflexivity / strong evaluation, but subordinates it to social 'authenticity'.

For Taylor, the deliberative/reflective evaluator found in liberalism lacks depth (1976, p287) because he is disengaged and lacks roots – he is a *weak evaluator*. In contrast, Taylor's '*strong evaluator*' utilises a '*vocabulary of worth*' – evaluates desires in terms of some being nobler and higher than others, according to a standard provided by an overall way of life/worldview (1976, p34). Evaluation consists in assessment in the light of fixed goals, a sensitivity to certain standards, and the sense of self is the sense of where one stands in relation to these standards. Strong evaluations are an horizon and foundation out of which we reflect and evaluate. Thus, for Taylor, 'authenticity' and autonomy are both retained, but with the latter subordinate to the former, and the former subordinate to 'community'. This 'relative autonomy' is valued as a means to avoiding being trapped in absolutist community, but also because any return to the latter would jeopardise the positive aspects of modern identity – ideals of moral benevolence, calls for universal concern and justice.

There are problems with Taylor's position. He replaces the liberal primacy of the individual with the primacy of 'community', but seems to conflate 'community' with what is social and relational. Although the constitution of identity is social / dialogical, in the sense of '*relational*', it does not follow that it is also therefore simultaneously either (a) socially *determined* rather than conditioned, and/or (b) 'communal', so Taylor's approach is always at risk of becoming an 'oversocialized' / 'downwards conflation' view of the individual.

What Taylor seeks is personal autonomy / reflexivity within a public order of standards and evaluations, a publicly established order of references to rely on as *tacit background*. But this tacit background is precisely what autonomous or

relatively autonomous persons will, sooner or later, want to make explicit. Unless, that is, the purpose of reflection is merely to bring the self voluntarily into conformity with the given aims, attachments, rules, and roles of society by reflexively internalising its social sanctions and boundaries. Yet once Taylor (and ditto Sandel) concedes that self reflexivity exists then any assured embeddedness in social roles and rules ends – with self-reflection comes distance and alternative options. Taylor sidesteps this with his assertion that we cannot think outside a ‘communal background’ and so, presumably, reflexivity will always remain within this communal paradigm, but this assertion raises more problems than it solves. It can be argued that if community, or relationships, are *automatically* constitutive of agency then they are *without commitment* – external goods. The basis of *commitment* is self reflectivity – the person can commit to others, to the roles and rules of the group, to society, or alternatively, censure, critique, and depart from the group. Taylor’s position on all this remains vague and open to interpretation, but that it leans towards the communitarian extreme is suggested by his view of authenticity.

His conception of ‘community’ feels vague or left implicit. His target seems to be not specifically liberalism but the atomistic, ‘disengaged’, instrumental rationality of any society resting on capitalist, technological, and bureaucratic institutions. But for it to do the work in his theory that Taylor requires it to do would entail a much more substantive conception of community than he ever specifies, so there is no sense of an alternative ‘community’ that could underpin the ideal of ‘authenticity’. It is clear that he regards the wider ‘horizon of significance’ of any such community as being one that should promote authenticity, but it becomes too nebulous without some clearer specification of any such community’s socio-economic and political characteristics.

The difficulties involved in Taylor’s view of ‘social authenticity’ are also found in his politics of recognition (Taylor 1994). Taylor explores the connection between affirming the equal dignity of individuals and acknowledging their cultures : the former entails the latter because individual identities are socially and dialogically constructed, and this is why recognition is important. This contrasts with the Kantian view that we respect and value persons independently of the worth of their individual

or cultural characteristics. If recognition requires a positive substantive appraisal, then it is equal respect, not equal recognition, that we owe other individuals or cultures. But for Taylor, respecting other cultures whilst not recognizing their worth is inconsistent, because selves are social and dialogical, people cannot be disentangled from their cultures. The logic of this would then be that we cannot separate judgements about the value of people from appraisals of the value of their culture : we must value or condemn them collectively.

In practice, and implicitly in theory, Taylor's application of 'authenticity' is to *groups and cultures* – recognition and difference – so that *individual* authenticity is swamped. The recognition of *individual authenticity* may threaten the preservation of *cultural authenticity*, and Taylor doesn't clarify this tension between the two. Individual authenticity risks being implicitly regarded by Taylor as being a negative 'self-determining' freedom. Similarly, claims for recognition must appeal to a 'shared horizon of meaning' – the prevailing 'moral horizon' has a veto over conceptions of, and demands for, authenticity.

It contrasts comprehensively with the view of J.S.Mill.

## **JOHN STUART MILL : THE TYRANNY OF THE SOCIAL.**

In this section I want to look at how Mill's ideas relate to autonomy, self-realization and authenticity, though this is developed further in the following Chapter. Despite the 150 year gap between Mill and Taylor, and making allowances for Mill's 19<sup>th</sup> century terminology, Mill nevertheless conveys a more dynamic picture than does Taylor of the interplay between natural, social, and individual, and the potential for a relative personal autonomy that emerges from this relation. Of particular interest is his notion of '*self-culture*', which attributes to the individual a capacity for agency and autonomy that is absent in Taylor. There are different ways of interpreting Mill on these issues. His view of the potential 'tyranny of the social' does not seem to be premised on a traditional 'asocial' liberal view that regards the 'social' as external to the individual. Rather, Mill's worry is the way in which the *social* can swamp the *individual* , determining rather than conditioning, denying it any relative autonomy.

Mill's *individuality* assumes social beings, and social relations and sociality are essential components in his account of human nature. Individuality and sociality are not contradictory but complementary notions, and the development of one's individuality is inextricably tied to and must be balanced by the development of one's sociality. They are two aspects of the same whole, a developed being, and if they do not grow together then one's development is hindered or unbalanced. (see Donner 1991, p113-20, 143-9).

Mill's conception of 'human nature' is approximately similar to that outlined above as the concept of self realization. He regards human nature as being grounded in certain generic capacities or faculties – affective, cognitive, and moral – but nevertheless in significant respects quite malleable, able to be expanded or channelled in various directions. For Mill, human nature adapts itself to different contexts, producing a range of possibilities on the basis of which the individual constructs and creates an actual life, emphasising appropriate traits, talents, and pursuits. He does not pre-suppose that all human beings have the same nature, or at all times have the same initial dispositions, or that human nature is unchanging. This is one of Mill's most important theses : that basic original, universal human nature does not explain much – we have to take into account the modifications produced by history and culture. As he comments in '*A System of Logic*' –

What we now are and do is a very small degree the result of the universal circumstances of the human race, or even of our own circumstances acting through the original qualities of our species, but mainly of the qualities produced in us by the whole previous history of humanity. (Mill 1974, p915)

Human beings are among the causes of human character.

The circumstances in which mankind are placed... form the characters of the human beings; but the human beings, in their turn, mould and shape the circumstances for themselves and for those who come after them. (Mill 1974, p913)

Even if basic human nature is universal and unchanging (as Mill probably supposed, though it seems not to be essential to his position), human *culture* changes and is a more important influence than underlying human nature. Thus the most important



explanatory generalisations are not about original human nature, but about individuals as formed within their particular society or culture.

For Mill, self-development is bound up with the development of generic human faculties but it also crucially involves the development of '*autonomy*' and *individuality*. As Donner (1991, p120-22) describes these in Mill –

“Individuality centres on the process by which each person discovers his or her own unique mix of generic capacities, talents and abilities. Autonomy is concerned with the critical reflection, choice, and endorsement of character, projects, and pursuits in harmony with ones nature ..... (but) human nature is not unitary and fixed, but rather consists of a range of possibilities on the basis of which the agent constructs and creates an actual life, emphasising appropriate traits, talents, and pursuits”.

For Mill, 'free choice' is fundamental and has a significance that feels different to its use in liberal individualism : for liberals choice is essentially about the liberty to do things; whereas for Mill it is primarily about *self-development*, for which liberty is a requirement : *choices should be such as to develop a person's potentialities*. And it is this that underlies Mill's whole focus on liberty : as we saw in Chapter 3, self-determination is Mill's conceptual equivalent of self-realization, and it's goal is individuality. Mill's self-determination is the equivalent of praxis and self activity.

As Gray states it –

“Mill's theory of individuality ....combines the claim that man is his own maker with the claim that, for each man, a nature exists which awaits discovery”. (1983, p86)

But recalling Mill's 'experiments in living', Donner comments that for Mill –

“Humans must both discover and create their selves and characters by discovering the range of mix of talents and creating a distinctive self on this groundwork” (Donner 1991, p122).

However Mill, unusually for a liberal, is preoccupied with the way in which the social and cultural environment of a society can prevent its members from leading the best life possible just as surely as can repression by the state, and in *On Liberty* he warns against both social and state oppression -

“When society itself is the tyrant – society collectively, over the separate individuals who compose it (Mill 1991, p8)



Social oppression, "the tyranny of society", arises from a diffuse source, "society collectively", and can "enslave the soul", bringing the individual into conformity with the norms of the culture.

Given this background importance of generic human nature, individual potentialities, and culture, Mill's central question concerns the issue of 'liberty and necessity', free-will and determinism, and in Book 6 of his 'A System of Logic' he begins by asking

—

"Are the actions of human beings, like all other natural events, subject to invariable laws ?" (Mill 1974, VI.i2).

Determinism / necessity suggests they are. But Mill wants to question this and starts by getting rid of the word *necessity*. Even in the purely physical realm a cause does not necessitate, constrain, or compel the effect to happen. If we say "X" causes "Y" we should generally add the qualification 'other things being equal' : i.e. Y will follow upon X *if no other cause interferes*. However, some causal connections are so very regular that we can be (almost) sure that nothing else is going to interfere : if we step in front of a train it is likely we will die; but if we drink something poisonous, it is possible that medical treatment will succeed in preventing death. Mill suggests that most statements that can be made about patterns of cause and effect in human affairs are of the second kind - if x happens, y will probably happen, but not inevitably; it will happen other things being equal, but some other cause may intervene to prevent it.

The reason why Mill wants to make this point is that the notions of necessity, constraint, compulsion, are inconsistent with freedom of choice, and Mill wants to find a place for free choice within a causal theory of human action. He suggests that the determinists or fatalists speak as if nothing we could do, no choice we could make, could prevent whatever hereditary and environmental causes dictate. They believe that human actions are determined by the human character which itself is conditioned by extraneous circumstances - existing social relations, physical constraints, and antecedent collective experience -

'that his nature is such, or that his circumstances have so moulded his character, that nothing can now prevent him from feeling and acting in a particular way, or at least that no effort of his own can hinder it' (Mill 1974 , p840).

For the fatalistic determinist –

‘His character is formed for him, and not by him ...his wishing that it had been formed differently is of no use, he has no power to alter it’ (Mill 1974, p 840).

In ‘*A System of Logic*’ Mill confronted this social fatalism and attacked its product, the irresponsible, impotent, human actor, and the result was a concept of freedom which corresponded with Mill’s argument in ‘*On Liberty*’. Against fatalism Mill maintains that our inheritance and our upbringing and whatever other external causes there are, are not too powerful to be counteracted by our own decisions. Life is not like stepping in front of the train. Inheritance, upbringing, circumstances, etc., may be counteracted by *my own wish or desire* -

"he has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character" (Mill 1974, p 840). We cannot directly *will* to be different from what we are, any more than we can directly will to be rid of a headache - but we can will to take a headache tablet, we can *indirectly* bring about the change we desire. But we *cannot* will to change unless something in our inheritance, upbringing, circumstances, etc., *makes* us desire to become different. The message is, then, that we *can* change if we want to (if *experience* makes us want to): not by a naked act of will (from now on I won't be irritable), but by deciding to do certain things that will bring about a change in our character or mood for the future (e.g. we may decide to reorganise our schedule so that we don't get overtired, and then we may become less irritable). Mill doesn't think that we can work miracles

A potential problem for Mill here is his admission that the will to alter our own character is given to us, not by any effort of ours, but by circumstances we can't help: it comes to us from *external causes*, or not at all. Which means that, for Mill, external (i.e. social) circumstances which either stimulate or inhibit its development take on crucial significance in the individual's development.

From whatever cause, Mill is postulating a process of character formation which adds to the factors of causation the ability to alter ones own character. He insists that agents' characters are the source of their desires and that each of these characters is

not solely the product of circumstances causally ascribable only to social conditioning. He suggests that causal laws are hypothetical not categorical. Such hypothetical laws would merely lay down what will, or will not, occur if intervening causes do not apply. But there will always be numerous, unpredictable, and inter-related intervening causes of one form or another. We ourselves are interveners in the affairs of others. Mill then extends our powers of intervention to include ourselves : that one of the most important causal antecedents of self-determination is the individuals desire to pursue it. In the *Logic* Mill variously labels this capacity 'self-development', 'self-amendment', 'self-mastery' or 'self-culture'. In *On Liberty* it becomes 'individuality'. It is Mill's theory of self-determination. For Mill, we are each born with our own specific potential, but self-development can be achieved only by 'self-culture', by gaining control over one's own impulses and making oneself into the person one would ideally wish to be. Mill does not deny that social influences play a significant role in making us what we are, but he believes that, given the *right conditions*, we are each capable of taking a hand in the formation of our own character and thus acquiring the power of making choices that are genuinely our own. The 'right conditions' here include negative liberty, i.e. freedom from undue pressure from others, the 'tyranny of the social.

So the concept of '**self-culture**' is an integral causal element of the human character which, in conjunction with 'outward circumstances', was central to the formation of human nature. Mill claims that a person –

'has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character. Its being, in the ultimate resort, formed for him, is not inconsistent with its being, in part, formed by him as one of the intermediate agents. His character is formed by his circumstances (including amongst these his particular organization), but his own desire to mould it in a particular way is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential' (Mill 1974, p 846).

'we, when our habits are not too inveterate', can, by willing the requisite means, make ourselves different...we can place ourselves under the influence of other circumstances. We are exactly as capable of making our own character, if we will, as others are of making it for us' (Mill 1974, p 847).

Individuals therefore have, to a degree, a power to alter their characters and only by doing so can they ever hope to achieve an individual freedom. Clearly, Mill is

working here with a positive conception of liberty involving 'self-mastery' or self-determination in the sense of personal autonomy not agency. It is the capacity for self-culture/individuality, as a basis for autonomous self-development and determination, that becomes Mill's central concern in *On Liberty* –

“A person whose desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own culture – is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam engine has a character” (Mill 1991, p149).

“It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it, and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation”. (Mill 1991, p161)

For Mill, every individual, given the ability and opportunity, must therefore assert their individuality, their authority over their own development. Individual nature is not meant to be raw material moulded by tradition and custom, but a living growth requiring all-round development. For the sake of the integrity and quality of individual life each person must plan his own life and exercise his own judgement by subjecting custom and convention to rational scrutiny. Conformity robs the individual of his human aspects, reducing him to a servile and narrow imitator. Uniformity of behaviour is an artificial state of affairs created by the tyranny of prevailing fashions, a sign that individual nature has been suppressed and forced into a narrow range of preconceived directions and patterns.

Mill's central objection to blind conformity to custom is that if a man accepts custom simply because it is custom, then he does not make a *choice*. To that extent he is less of a human person, for he has failed to develop in himself 'any of the distinctive endowments of a human being'. What is lost in the forced imitation by people of good models of conduct is the conscious choice between alternatives, and all that this involves. The act of choice brings into play various faculties –

‘He who lets the world ...choose his plan of life for him has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide and, when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct



which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one'. (Mill 1991, p117)

People who make choices develop what Mill calls a "character": their desires and feelings are the products of their own conscious choices and are not the passively generated products of external factors. The process of discovering and creating our own 'natures' is an empirical one, via experiment, observation, and reflection – Mill's 'experiments in living' undertaken in order to discover the mode of life best suited to the individual. As suggested previously, humans must both discover and create their selves and characters by discovering the range of mix of talents and creating their self on this groundwork. But he places this postulate firmly within a sociological framework by explaining that our capability to change our characters is formed for us by *experience* : 'experience of the painful consequences of the character we previously had, or by some strong feeling of admiration or aspiration accidentally aroused'. (Mill 1974, p341).

Mill is generally known as a theorist of liberty, but liberty is only a means to self-determination, and the latter is inseparable from the development of a person's potentialities, a process of 'self-realization, which is in turn, for Mill, a process of being 'true to oneself'. This whole commitment and process is so highly valued by Mill that it is a form of 'ethical autonomy'. Almost all the elements of self-realization and authenticity discussed earlier in this Chapter are present in Mill, cloaked behind the concept of liberty. Thus, for Mill, self-development is bound up with the development of generic human capacities and potentials, but it centres on the process by which each person discovers his own unique mix of individual capacities, abilities and talents. His 'autonomy' is concerned with the critical reflection, choice, and endorsement of character, projects, and pursuits in harmony with ones own capacities and potentials. Human nature itself is susceptible to almost unlimited variation and modification, which is explained by the power, rooted in *reflexive* thought, which humans have to make experiments on themselves, to engage in self-culture. The right choice for each individual depends on the sort of person he is, and hence varies from individual to individual. Each person should choose that pattern of life which develops to the fullest extent his potentialities, subject only to



the condition that in so developing himself, he does not harm others, and so does not hamper their development.

However, Mill's view of human 'potentialities', their capacities and faculties, takes on a distinct form, and this view has implications for the whole of Mill, and we look at this in the next Chapter.

## **CONCLUSION.**

Notions of self-realization and authenticity have traditionally been assumed to refer to something pre-given in the self, some essentialist core, that is unchosen, and that both are therefore at odds with 'self-determination' because the latter entails choices and open-endedness. I have sought to show how this assumption is mistaken.

What is authentic about humans is that which is definitive or characteristic of them, so that *being authentic* is living in accord with those defining features. But the latter are that there is no inflexible human or individual nature, or identifiable essence, to be found : that is the point of the Greek creation myth referred to in Chapter 2 – that what is 'pre-given' is the capacity to self-make. Humans are incomplete, a bundle of potentials, but equipped with a generalised capacity to create, and equipped with the means to do so. What is 'pre-given' are the raw materials, the capacities and potentials to work with, from which a self is made, but the process of making has to be undertaken, and this combines elements of the natural, social, and individual, and self-determination must be integral to it if it is to be a process of *self-making*, of *self-activity*. Without self-determination there is no self-realization or authenticity, no self-making : the three form a symbiotic trio. Being authentic is being true to this process, acknowledging it in the life of our self, and others. Self-realization and authenticity are inseparable parts of this process : being 'true to our self' entails the realization of a self and its potentialities. Both are integral to the ethical autonomy discussed in Chapter 2, a theme we return to in Chapter 7.



## **CHAPTER 6    INTERNAL GOODS AND VALUE.**

The purpose of this Chapter is to propose and clarify the notions of *internal and external goods* as conceptions of the good. The condition to aim at is a life *rich* in internal goods ('well-being'/ fulfillment/flourishing) and with a *just* share of external goods (money, power, prestige, influence). Both are necessary, but internal goods are primary. In seeking *external* goods we may do whatever our conceptions of good lives require, as long as we do not violate unconditional commitments to internal goods, and the inviolability of others. 'Internal goods and value' relate directly to the senses of inviolability, self-determination, and self-realization discussed in previous Chapters. There is also a parallel between internal and external goods and the '*being*' and '*having*' discussed in Chapter 1; as there is also to Buber's '*I*'-'*Thou*' or '*I*'-'*It*' relations, and Rousseau's *amour de soi* and *amour propre*'.

If external goods predominate then internal goods tend to be eroded. This should be an issue for liberal values, and for liberal social and political theory, but it seems strangely neglected. Liberal-capitalist culture is generally critiqued for being materialistic and consumerist, whilst its economic production values are normally driven by profit and efficiency. Its *ethos* is therefore one of external goods rather than internal goods, and this has consequences for the types of character, social relations, ways of life, and conceptions of the good that prevail in capitalist societies. A major advantage of the internal / external goods distinction is precisely that it directly confronts this issue, but also that in doing so it reveals a one-dimensional aspect of liberalism.

But initially we need to discuss the issue of subjective and objective conceptions of the good.

### **SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE GOOD.**

At the end of the discussion about self-determination in Chapter 3 it was concluded that a response to the subjectivity problems of 'endorsement' might be to embrace a position which combines subjective and objective components. If the standard which

people use to endorse their lives is a problem then a remedy is to stipulate what such standards should be. This would combine subjective endorsement with some standard of what is independently valuable. In effect this is what liberal-egalitarianism does in its theory of the *Right and the Good*, in which autonomous and subjectively endorsed conceptions of the Good must respect an objective standard of the Right or Justice that is established and maintained by the State. But we need to explore this objective/subjective distinction more fully.

One way to classify substantive theories of the good is on a continuum from subjective to objective (Sher 1997, p8-9) –

- (a) the view that all value depends on people's actual preferences, choices, or affective states : by wanting, choosing, or enjoying something a person confers value on it.
- (b) what is valuable is not what persons actually want, choose, or enjoy, but what they would want, choose, or enjoy under different conditions – if they were more rational, better informed, more imaginative, less oppressed, had better access to resources and opportunities, etc.
- (c) what is of ultimate value is not actual, or ideal, desires and choices but either –
  - (i) some forms of activity, or experience, or relationships, or
  - (ii) certain broad capacities or traits shared by all humans, or
  - (iii) certain facts about societyso that the good life *for all* is the one that most fully realizes these.

Any variant of the first two is a form of *subjectivism*. If a view denies that these exhaust the determinants of value it is a form of *objectivism*, point (c), which Sher calls '*perfectionism*'. Both liberal individualism and individuality seem to start with an objective standard, point (c), because of their emphasis on individual inviolability : they interpret the implications of this in quite different ways, and their theories are relatively open-ended, but they are nevertheless built on this foundation.

Sher (1997, p219) comments that if we try to trace all the elements of a good life to a single source then we may locate that source either *within* the subjectivity of the

person (the subjective position), or *outside* the subjectivity of the person (the objective position). (He adds that the source may also be directed at a goal – teleological; or may not – non-teleological). The *subjective* answer to what makes a life good is that the people living this life sincerely hold this belief, whether it be an independent standard or the satisfaction of wants that makes particular lives good : we ourselves are the final judges of the goodness of our lives, rather than the ‘judge’ being some external standard. But the objectivist says we may be mistaken : our preferences may not be informed, may be manipulated, be adaptive preferences, or be socially conditioned, etc. We have lacked the autonomy for our preferences to be authentically ours. The *objective* answer is that this belief is reasonable only if the likelihood of its being mistaken is eliminated, and if it can be shown to have *independent value* and grounds for being believed. Subjectivists deny, and objectivists assert, that this can be done. For the subjectivist (emotivist, existentialist, postmodernist) there are no such, or any, grounds for justifying good lives. The best policy is for individuals to make a decision about how they want to live, and the subsequent life will be good or disappointing according to their own subjective judgement. To hope for more is an illusion. But there are problems with this subjectivist view of objectivism.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Sher’s point (a) above, subjective justification, is necessary but not sufficient for the reasonability of the belief that our lives are good. Point (a) makes sense in its own terms and it is widely supported, especially in liberal societies. But if we look at it not just as a theory of the good, but also as a type of society, it has an odd or illusory feel to it. All societies have rules, laws, norms, values, practices, etc, that actively constrain or prevent people from getting what they *consciously* want, choose, or enjoy – presumably because the latter are regarded by that society as *not* necessarily always conferring value. It has to be balanced by some wider objective standard, such as concern for others, the common good, etc. This is a simple fact of collective social life, but one which will be constantly challenged and breached. So no theory of the good, and no society, can realistically subscribe to (a) fully. It can only be an ideal type, approximated to a greater or lesser degree, according to a society’s structure and culture, e.g. the extent to which people have shared and common interests over a wide range of goals, especially those relating to



who does what and who gets what. So a theory of the good based on (a) must also be a theory or model of society which justifies (a) and explains how it will be achieved. But the latter then begins to become an objective standard of the good, a part of (c).

If we look at Sher's point (a) from a different angle : because everyone grows up in a specific society and is socialized to its culture, so that human desires and interests are socially constituted, then we might expect that the members of any society are likely to *learn to want just those things that the society provides*. If this is the case then, as argued in Chapter 3, the ultimate authority of individual judgement comes into question – individual preferences cannot be taken at face value. How do we know if our preferences are misinformed, manipulated, adaptive preferences, or socially conditioned ? The liberal could argue that the norms, laws, practices, etc, of liberal societies are based on consensus, but the latter is also socially constituted. The let out would be to say that liberal societies are diverse and pluralistic, so that what people *learn to want* is similarly diverse. Critics would accept that the comparative evidence suggests there is truth in this, but that the extent of pluralism and diversity is exaggerated by liberals – that it is '*liberal*' pluralism and diversity.

The point being made here is that the status of (a) as a theory of the good, or as a type of society, is dubious *in practice*, and it could be argued that the only real main option for theories, and most societies, including liberal ones, is a more open or closed version of (c), co-existing in dynamic tension with (b), whilst (a) hovers in the background as an ideal that is sometimes realized, and / or as a legitimating device.

But when (c) is established as the status quo, then it will appear to those living it that it is a case of (a), unless it is so closed that it excludes (b) altogether. My point is that *the subjective and the objective are not easily separated* : the objective is internalised and becomes the subjective, which in turn develops the objective – Archer's point in Chapter 4 about structural conditioning and structural elaboration : '*structural agency*' as I referred to it. The argument of Chapter 4 was that autonomy *is* possible, that the social is rarely unitary or monolithic, that there are natural sources of agency, and that individual autonomy is an outcome of the interplay between natural, social, and individual. The social may penetrate to the core of the individual, so he is then regarded as ontologically *social*. But to assume that this therefore denies any

possibility of autonomy is to misunderstand the social : the plurality, diversity, tensions, and contradictions of the social are in themselves a source of potential individual autonomy. But perceiving point (c) as being (a) is to misconstrue the world, to perceive autonomy and individuality where none exists, to take them for granted rather than to recognize them as a struggle and achievement, subject to structural and cultural constraints. So (a) is an ideal type rather than normality, and the above view is a sort of cautionary tale.

I want to look briefly here at 'happiness' and 'well-being' as candidates for the *good life*.

### **Happiness or Well-Being.**

Are there goods all normal humans seek, and is this search essential to good lives ? The most frequently cited affirmative answer suggests '*happiness*'. In general terms Kekes regards 'happiness' as 'roughly a contented state of mind, with the nature and causes left unspecified' (Kekes 1989, p113). Sumner (1999 p172) is more specific and defines happiness as '*life satisfaction*', which has both (a) an *affective* component (experiencing the conditions of your life as fulfilling or rewarding), and (b) a *cognitive* component (judging that your life is going well for you, by 'your' standards for it). But the evidence suggests that many give up contentment / happiness for other alternatives – social justice, adventure, intellectual passion, art, a cause believed in.

A more specific claim about the pursuit of happiness is that there are some particular goods whose attainment would ensure it and good lives. The happiness/perfectionism equation works only if there is a fixed and specified number of goods whose achievement would satisfy all of us. So we would need to know what the particular goods are. But many reject pleasure, power, reason, wealth, truth, beauty, the esteem of others. Not all goods are sought for the sake of happiness, and the goods alleged to bring happiness are so numerous and varied that none of them can be said to be a universal requirement for all good lives. Thus, the connection between happiness and good lives is not a necessary one – good lives might not be happy, and happy lives might not be good. Kekes agrees with Sumner that lives can be good

only if the people living them find them *satisfying*, but this is not the same as happiness –

“While happiness, in the specific sense may be the source of such satisfaction, it is not the only source. People may find their lives satisfying because they involve achievement, adventure, love, struggle against evil, quiet contemplation, creativity, service, or honourably doing their duty. These kinds of satisfying lives may occasion happiness, but they may not” (Kekes, 1989 p 114).

Meanwhile, Sumner wants to distinguish between happiness and ‘*well-being*’, for reasons indicated previously : a person’s self-evaluation may not be informed, and it may not be autonomous. For Sumner, well-being consists in ‘*authentic happiness*’, the happiness of an informed and autonomous subject. Thus : one can be *happy*, without being informed, or autonomous – without being ‘*authentic*’, in Sumner’s usage. Whereas ‘*well-being*’ requires all the latter. The only way to make sense of this would be to suggest that ‘happiness’ is subjective, and ‘well-being’ is objective. But if the happy agent’s judgement does not reflect his ‘true self’, who he ‘really is’, as opposed to who he takes himself to be, then Sumner also appears to be making ‘authenticity’ an objective good, though he does not elaborate upon the concept, and it goes against his subjectivist approach (see Haybron 2003, p 20).

So, both Sumner and Kekes agree that happiness is too subjective as a standard of the good, and Kekes replaces it with ‘life satisfaction’, and Sumner replaces life satisfaction with *well-being*, though the two might be read as meaning a similar thing.

Kekes uses ‘life satisfaction’ as a synonym for an open-ended and self-directed ‘*eudaimonia*’, which is usually translated as well-being or ‘flourishing’. The point being that the actual terminology is perhaps not that significant, what matters is its substance. Any substantive theory of the good must combine the objective and subjective. We saw in Chapter 3 that the perfectionism / anti-perfectionism debate seemed to hinge on (a) whether there is an objective standard of the good, and (b) what the *route* to practising this good should be. With regard to (a), the argument here is that the objective standard of the good is internal goods, though in appropriate

combination with external goods, and that this derives from individual inviolability. Regarding (b), the route must be an *individual* one.

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL GOODS.**

The distinction between internal and external goods and value follows that made by Aristotle between internal and external goods, and developed by MacIntyre in his distinction between the internal and external goods of a practice. Both of these exhibit some similarities or overlaps with parallel distinctions made by many other theorists, for example : Aristotle's and Spinoza's passivity / activity; J.S. Mill's higher and lower goods ; Marx's alienated / non-alienated labour ; MacPherson's possessive and developmental individualism; Erich Fromm's having and being.

But the main focus of the Chapter is what is meant by internal and external goods, and then the way in which these are employed by J.S.Mill and Alisdair MacIntyre. It is argued that Mill's distinction between higher and lower goods or pleasures parallels that between internal and external goods, and that his 'higher' goods/pleasures are essentially a combination of self-determination and self-realization, his route to individuality. In contrast, MacIntyre's 'communitarian' position seems to reject all notions of self-determination/self-realization/individuality, but it is argued that his notion and use of internal goods is dependent upon them, and that in their absence his internal goods are transformed into external goods, thereby undermining his theory.

A further motive for utilising the internal and external goods distinction is that it confronts what always seems to be a major weakness within liberalism : its position in relation to capitalism, capitalist values and culture, and the power of these to shape people's preferences and their conceptions of the good. Liberal-capitalist culture is generally critiqued for being materialistic and consumerist, whilst its economic production values are driven by profit and efficiency. Its ethos is therefore one of external goods rather than internal goods, and this has consequences for the types of character and conceptions of the good that prevail in capitalist societies. A major



advantage of the internal / external goods distinction is precisely that it directly confronts this issue and in doing so reveals a one-dimensional aspect of liberalism.

With regard to the issue of 'goods' and 'value'. Internal goods generate internal value, and external goods generate external value. Some things are 'valuable as a means' (good as means to something else), and others are 'valuable as an end' (good in themselves). By the latter we mean something that is worth while doing, having, or getting for its own sake, not something that is valuable *in itself* (*intrinsic value*). Other things may be good in both ways, mixed goods. These all might be referred to as intrinsic, instrumental, and mixed goods and value. But the distinction here is between internal goods and value and external goods and value, though each might be mixed. The only kind of value that is not a value for some person or persons is *intrinsic value*, or the value that a thing is alleged to have *in itself*. Perhaps the only candidate for the latter is conscious life itself. This is a complex matter not directly relevant here, though it is touched on indirectly in the links made to inviolability discussed in Chapter 2. Insofar as things are good in themselves, they are 'internal goods', constituents of good lives; and insofar as they are means, they are external goods', they help to bring good lives about. The 'things' to which the above refers might be an activity, a relationship, a standard or rule, etc. Every life is a way of life, a mix of projects and relationships, built on the natural, social, and individual. Goods will be internal or external to such ways of life.

For Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1) the pursuit of the good life, 'eudaimonia', is a pursuit of real rather than apparent goods. Real goods consist of –

- bodily goods (health, vitality, pleasures, etc);
- external goods – food, drink, shelter, wealth, etc, necessary for our bodily goods;
- goods of the soul/psychological goods : knowledge, skill, social life, friends, respect.
- moral and intellectual virtues.

Internal goods are '*goods of the soul*', and seem to have been designated 'internal' as a contrast with 'external' goods. But Aristotle's account is brief and fairly



obscure, so the main sources here are Kekes (1989 Chapter 10); MacIntyre (1985 Chapter 14); and Crowley (1987, Chapter 7). MacIntyre's use of internal and external goods is tied to a specific sense of 'practice' which does not correspond to ordinary, or his own previous, usage, and his approach is discussed later in the Chapter. Crowley mostly conforms to MacIntyre's usage, though with interesting additions. Kekes' approach is more generic, and initially feels closer to Aristotle's usage, but is not one that MacIntyre would necessarily agree with.

So, the account below is looking at internal / external goods in relation to *activities, relationships, a standard or rule, etc, in general* (rather than in relation to MacIntyre's specific 'practices'), but for shorthand convenience I intend to use the word 'practices' to refer to these. Thus a 'practice' may be a game (chess, football, etc), a productive activity/occupation, an intellectual activity (science, history), artistic pursuits (music, painting), all of which MacIntyre refers to, but it may also be other activities and relationships which he excludes, for reasons we look at later. With regard to such activities, Kekes suggests -

*"Internal goods* are satisfactions involved in being and acting according to our conceptions of good lives. *External goods* are satisfactions derived from possessing the means required for living in the ways we do and from receiving appropriate rewards for it". (Kekes 1989, p185).

The first sentence is accurate in itself but insufficient, and it could be misleading, seeming to lean too far in a subjectivist direction, so we need to unravel it a bit. For example, we need to know what it is that makes such activities satisfying.

Kekes gives the example of philosophers –

*"The external goods* their lives yield are, among others, the salary they receive; the status they have at their university; the respect of their students and colleagues; the prestige they enjoy in the profession; and the influence their opinions carry. The *internal goods* are the satisfactions of having understood another philosopher's outlook; of knowing that they got a difficult argument just right; of having succeeded in presenting persuasively their own thoughts about a problem; of observing themselves gradually growing in understanding how philosophy illuminates the human condition, finding that it informs their lives and makes them more thoughtful and, perhaps, wiser persons; of feeling at home in a noble tradition". (Kekes 1989 p187)

The 'philosopher' lives the way he wants to live, he is being and doing what he

reflectively and reasonably decided to be and to do, and he finds it satisfying. That satisfaction, experienced in that way, is what makes this internal good intrinsically good. But it is also instrumentally good, because it is required for making his life good. Its instrumentality, however, is not a means-end connection but one of participation, composition, or constitution. Both external and internal goods are required for good lives, but they are different.

For Kekes, *internal goods* are satisfactions (a) involved in the successful exercise of some of our dispositions (b) they are produced by the exercise of our talents and capacities, and (c) in the context of a way of life to which we have committed ourselves. The good making components of our lives should be *our own* contributions, depend on our own efforts, on what we are and do. *External goods* - money, power, prestige, honour, and influence - are satisfactions involved in possessing *the means* to the exercise of our dispositions, talents, capacities, and commitments, and in receiving various forms of reward and recognition for doing it well. They depend on circumstances that are often beyond our control, being benefits conferred on us by others or by institutions.

But there still seems to be something missing from Kekes points (a) to (c), some spark that brings it all to life : *creativity*. The philosopher is being 'creative'.

Crowley (1987, p228) gives the example of the author whose name would guarantee substantial sales of any book he cares to write. He can see his books as merely instrumental to making money – be a good businessman rather than a good author. But the rewards of money, fame, prestige, etc, are not intrinsic to the production of a literary work – they are external to it because they can be obtained by anyone in a range of ways. But there are other goods involved in the writing of a book which are bound up with or internal to that activity itself. To be a good author requires one to value the meeting of a standard intrinsic to the practice of his art, rather than because it will procure him some good external to it. To be a *good* author in this sense entails being creative.

MacIntyre clarifies internal goods. The internal goods of a practice include numerous things, but initially it will refer to the specialist knowledge, skill and technique, an

ethos, ends, rules, and standards of excellence, that are all characteristic of a particular activity. These are internal because they are the result of the workings of the practice.

MacIntyre does not explicitly say this, but we have to assume that it is to these we are committed, and immerse our selves in, because in doing so we begin to achieve those things suggested by Kekes above. In the terminology previously used, they are or become a form of *self-activity*, a *praxis*, the combination of being self-determining and self-realizing. MacIntyre would not accept this, for reasons indicated later, and his own point is slightly different. To participate in the activity is to acknowledge two standards : what must be done as defined by the 'rules' of the practice; and what is *good* practice or performance, as defined by ones fellow practitioners. To play chess a player must abide by the standards which define the playing of chess ; it is not a matter of individual preference or decision : the criteria for acting well are determined by the practice in which we are engaged. MacIntyre seems to imply that this acceptance is an offshoot of respecting the authority of the rules and the practice. My point is that this acceptance and respect must be based on ones own commitment to it, generated by the self-activity referred to above. For whichever reason, such internal goods allow someone to *excel* at the practice because it is considered worthwhile to do so in its own right, and not solely as a means to goods external to it. Excellence involves an idea of what a good performance is, and assumes that this is a standard to which practitioners aspire. Internal goods can also be competitive, but a competition to excel, so that all those who engage in the activity, benefit by the achievement of excellence because this raises the standard of what it means to excel. Such internal goods can be achieved only by commitment to the practice itself – practitioners exercise and develop their talents and skills, aiming at excellence.

Internal goods are achieved as a result of personal effort, due to the cultivation of our capacities, to being active and creative, to working hard at some endeavor, to becoming proficient at the skills required by our way of life. Internal goods, or the satisfactions arising from them, are therefore not accidental, they are the by products of our own activities; and they cannot but be deserved, because the agents are always responsible for achieving them. What capacities and potentials we have to cultivate depends on the outcome of the genetic and environmental lottery, but internal goods

and the satisfactions arising from them are in principle available to all and egalitarian. However, institutional settings and priorities may constrain or undermine internal goods. Internal goods are enjoyed as a result of living according to our commitments. So they are satisfying as confirmations that the supposed good lives we are directing ourselves toward are indeed good, and as genuinely enjoyable experiences of satisfying our important wants. They come to us when we are living and acting as we think we should, and they give us reasons to believe that we are correct in so thinking. Generally speaking, internal goods are indications that our lives are going well, though the satisfactions they give us may be outweighed by frustrations encountered in other aspects of our lives.

From what has been said so far, implicit in MacIntyre and explicit in Kekes, it seems reasonable to assume that internal goods will confer certain rewards to those involved (see Bond 1996, p221-6) -

1. the satisfaction of knowing one is learning well or has succeeded in becoming a good practitioner in an activity one is committed to.
2. the pleasures taken in exercising and developing ones capacities and skills
3. something to be valued, both for its own sake, but also because it contributes to a wider good.

Thus, internal goods generate internal value : they are things committed to for their own sake - an activity, a relationship, a standard / rule / principle, committed to (consciously or not) because, for example, they –

1. develop, or express, or create new, capacities and abilities.
2. enable the creative use of ones capacities and abilities.
3. empower, confer control, enhance self-determination.
4. serve to realize chosen projects.
5. generate intrinsic satisfaction.
6. contribute to a valued standard.

There is therefore a direct connection between internal goods as described above and the praxis or self-activity that underlie self-realization and authenticity discussed in the previous Chapter : they refer to the same activities and processes.



*External goods* - money, power, prestige, honour, and influence - are direct means to internal goods, and, therefore indirect means to good lives. Both types of goods are potential sources of pleasure or satisfaction and, thereby, can be bound up with an individual's own identity and interests. If internal goods are produced by the exercise of our talents and capacities, then external goods play a necessary role in establishing the conditions in which these can be exercised. The optimal external goods for particular activities will differ from task to task and from person to person. Athletes require one thing, scholars another; some function best under pressure, others do not. But external goods are intrinsically good if they are fair rewards for our achievements. Security, prestige, respect, and status make our lives better. They are good in themselves, because they are indications that our achievements are valued. As justly earned rewards they are public confirmations that we are doing well at our ways of life. They provide an objective corollary to the enjoyment of internal goods our activities yield by showing that others appreciate what we are doing. And if the system of distribution is justly based on merit and desert's, and if the goods received enhance the recipients' enjoyment of their lives without injuring others, then there is nothing objectionable about ensuing inequality.

However, external goods have no necessary connection to any particular type of activity – though some activities are more likely to produce these goods than others. If the acquisition of external goods is the primary reason for engaging in any practice then the practice and its standards are valued only *instrumentally* as a means to achieving other goods. They are external to practices in the sense that they are material rewards for engaging in the practice, but are not dependent upon the particular nature of the practice through which they are achieved, not dependent upon any commitment to the practice or activity or relationship.. They may be used in the pursuit of internal goods elsewhere, or in the satisfaction of immediate needs / desires, or in acquiring more external goods. External goods may be acquired through participating in any practice or in none. They are also not common goods to be shared but possessed by someone to the exclusion of others. Because external goods are in short supply they are the objects of competition in a zero sum game – there must be winners and losers. The more some people have of money, status, influence, prestige, the less is left for others. External goods depend on our standing



in a hierarchy that is maintained by an institution, part of whose function is to compare and rank achievements and distribute the scarce external goods. If external goods were not scarce and competitive, they would not be the rewards they are.

External goods are the currency of *institutions*. Institutions are required for the organization and sustenance of practices, but they constantly threaten to subvert and manipulate the practice by an emphasis on efficiency or effectiveness, subordinating the pursuit of internal goods to that of external goods. If the acquisition of external goods is the primary reason for engaging in any practice then the practice and its standards are valued only instrumentally as a means to achieving other goods. Without an internalised desire to commit or excel there are no incentives for anyone to respect the standards or even obey the rules – these are simply obstacles to be overcome. The consequences of a focus on external goods might be presumed to be, for example –

1. the quality of the practice will decline, because internal value/excellence will become a means to achieving external goods.
2. there will be a competitive struggle for power, position, and wealth, etc, a manipulative stance towards others, and the common good will be lost sight of or redefined as being focussed upon external goods.

In contrast, when the focus is on internal goods -

1. practitioners receive external rewards of income / recognition according to their excellence or deserts.
2. competition is for excellence - everyone benefits.

To obtain external goods individual effort is not necessary or sufficient. The usual objects of satisfaction, in the case of internal goods, are our own activities, while for external goods, they are the *high regard others have for us*. We can be worthy and deserving of prestige, honor, respect, security, or influence, yet they may elude us because their distribution is unjust, or because our merits are unrecognized. Nor is personal effort necessary, for external goods may be given unfairly to the undeserving, and at the perverse or fickle whim of the distributing institutions. External goods should depend on the appreciation of merit, but merit may be unappreciated, and the distribution of external goods need not signify desert.

External goods come to us from the outside, internal goods are the by-products of our own activities. External goods are given by institutions or people, and they are received by individuals. The process is public, and it can be seen by all who look. Internal goods are more private. People's possession of them can be observed by others, but the possibility depends on those enjoying them letting on that they do so. They are the satisfaction involved in doing well at our endeavors; the enjoyment of being and doing what we set out to be and do. Internal goods depend on the relation between activities done well and the moral perspectives of the agents; external goods depend on the relation between the activities of the agents and the public regard for them. As a result, we can enjoy internal goods without, or even in opposition to, existing institutions, while external goods are inseparably connected to them.

MacIntyre refers to the different qualities of body, mind, and character required to achieve internal or external goods. What is accounted a virtue for *goods of effectiveness* (external goods) will often be very different from what counts as a virtue for *goods of excellence* (internal goods). For example, in relation to both, a disposition to obey certain rules of justice will be accounted a virtue, but the justification of the rules, their content, and the nature of the binding force of the rules, will all be different, and these differences are rooted in the fundamental contrast between excellence and effectiveness. The latter is focussed upon winning regardless of circumstance. Those who subordinate the goods of excellence to those of effectiveness will, for example : understand politics as that arena in which each citizen seeks to achieve as far as possible what they *want* rather than justice ; individuals will be classified not in terms of what they do but what they consume or enjoy ; and fundamental relationships will be defined in terms of who provides what for whom, and who threatens the satisfaction of others by the pursuit of their own satisfaction. Not unlike the *instrumental reflexivity* discussed in the previous Chapter.

In contrast, one who excels wins under conditions of fairness, and imposes the constraints of fairness upon himself, because knowing how to judge excellence (which is itself a part of excellence) involves fairness in judging. Each person and

each performance has to be accorded what is due in respect of merit, like cases being judged on equal terms, unlike with the right degree of proportionality. For 'excellence', the content of justice is defined in terms of merit and desert. Politics is the process of determining such particular rewards, and the *polis* is that institution concerned with desert and achievement as a whole - the human good. The constitution of each *polis* is the expression of a set of principles about how goods are to be ordered into a way of life : the good for humans would be the form of life that was best for them ; to enjoy what is best is to flourish, to be *eudaimon* ; and what both the constitution and the life of a polity express is a judgement as to what way of life is best and what human flourishing consists in.

The suggestion here is that the condition to aim at is a life rich in internal goods and with a just share of external goods. Both are necessary, but internal goods are primary. In seeking external goods we may do whatever our conceptions of good lives require, as long as we do not violate unconditional commitments to internal goods.

## **MACINTYRE.**

The crux of the argument here is that MacIntyre's critique of liberal individualism obscures the way in which internal goods are connected to self-determination and self-realization. It is suggested that the concept of internal goods is dependent upon this connection, and that in its absence his internal goods are transformed into external goods. Such an interpretation is at odds with the intention of MacIntyre's project, but I would argue that his theory is contradictory and flawed without it.

To understand MacIntyre's approach to practices and internal/ external goods we need to set it in the context of his critique of emotivism, which takes the view that -

"all evaluative judgements, and more specifically all moral judgements, are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling".  
(1985, p 17)

And the key to the social content of emotivism is the fact that -

"emotivism entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations" (MacIntyre 1985, p 19)

Emotivist moral philosophy regards all moral discussions as no more than attempts to alter the preferences and feelings of others so that they accord with one's own, and it involves using whatever means might be effective to bring this about. By collapsing the distinction between personal and impersonal reasons, emotivism *removes the possibility of treating persons as ends*. To treat someone as a means is to attempt to have influence over others for reasons which are purely beneficial to oneself, and the method of giving persuasive arguments is not based on rational or logical good but on sociological and psychological coercion techniques.

Thus, for MacIntyre the emotivist moral agent is conceived of as being asocial and unencumbered, detached from any particular social context. Any moral position that the self takes on must be seen as an expression of ultimately arbitrary and purely personal preference; since they cannot be justified by rational criteria, their only justification for the person who adopts them is the fact that they have been freely chosen. In effect, then, the modern self that hangs together with the social content of emotivism is fixed or bounded independently of any of its social embodiments or characteristics, and lacks a coherent history. Neither its identity at any given time nor its identity over time are fixed by or dependent upon its attitudes, characteristics or life story; neither its personality nor its history are part of its substance; indeed, that substance assumes an abstract and ghostly character. This emotivist conception of the self is of course similar to the conception of the person as antecedently individuated that Sandel attributes to Rawls. It seems clear that, for MacIntyre, contemporary forms of liberalism are simply further symptoms of the emotivist disease that he is attempting to diagnose and cure : the liberal self is a version of the emotivist self.

To escape the subjectivism of emotivism, but to simultaneously be able to question his life, the individual requires some criterion outside himself, an objective standard, by which to decide among possible choices. To establish that criterion or framework, a standard is necessary which the individual is not free to accept or reject as he wills or chooses. Now that cosmology and metaphysical biology are no longer plausible, the source of that standard is *sociological* : it is set by the community's established social practices. Here we find criteria proposed to me which I can make my own in the sense that I can frame my choices and my actions in accordance with them, but



their authority is derived not from my choice but from the way in which in such a community they cannot fail to be regarded as normative.

He defines practices as -

“any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended”.(MacIntyre 1985, p175)

Entry into a practice requires acceptance of the authority of the standards and paradigms operative in the practice. I must subject my own preferences and attitudes to the communal standards and authorities that currently define the practice. However, subsequent to entry and apprenticeship, and having developed sound judgement with regard to excellence, the rules of practice can be questioned and broken, but only by those proficient in the practice. This is how practices evolve and progress. But such practical judgements are not subjective or arbitrary - they arise within a framework of agreed modes of argument and shared canons of relevance, allowing us to achieve an objectivity and impersonality of judgement that transcends purely personal expressions of preference. Thus, participating in such shared projects, and acceptance of such communally and historically determined standards, initiates individuals into forms of life in which human judgements of worth are immune to the threat of ‘emotivism’.

As said earlier, the standard of excellence is internal to the practice : to play chess well a player must abide by the standards which define the playing of chess ; it is not a matter of individual preference or decision : the criteria for acting well are determined by the practice in which we are engaged. As Crowley comments –

“Goods internal to practices thus depend for their very existence on the meaning that practitioners attach to them .....without (an) internalised desire to excel, there are no incentives for anyone to respect the standards or even obey the rules; these are simply obstacles to be overcome by any means possible....For this reason MacIntyre argues that goods internal to practices depend on a quality internal to the practitioner, a quality he calls virtue”. (MacIntyre 1985 p 231-2)

For MacIntyre, the virtues are dispositions that both sustain these practices and my ability to act within them. In pursuing internal goods practitioners are able to achieve



excellence of character, or virtue. Practices are the schools of the virtues. The internal standards of excellence of a practice are not a matter of individual choice and decision. The virtues are developed / realized in trying to achieve these standards of excellence. The virtues are needed for human flourishing.

So, to summarise MacIntyre's position : he needs an authoritative objective standard to counterbalance emotivism ; he finds this in socio-cultural categories – practices with internal goods and standards of excellence. He adds the 'narrative unity' of a life, and traditions, and we will look at these shortly. His model is a social one – *the authority of practices* - the *natural* and the *individual* are absent – and this seems to explain the different starting points of MacIntyre and Kekes. Kekes begins with the motivations and satisfactions of individuals, their commitment and self-directed choices. MacIntyre begins with the authority of established practices ; individuals only appear as de-naturalised bearers of practices and traditions, and the internalization of these is the development of virtues of character.

Thus, a central difficulty in MacIntyre's theory is the way that he conceives of the relationship between practices / internal goods / and individuals. Engagement in a social practice, acceptance of its tradition, can probably only generate internal goods if one's commitment to that practice comes 'from within', if it is in some way self-motivated, enables self-development and expression, so that the individual is in some way self-determined and self-realized by engaging in the practice. For it not to be so, and this is the crucial point, would mean that commitment to the practice emerges from submission to authority, or is manipulated, or is in some similar fashion instrumental, so that *external goods* become the primary incentive and motivation for engaging in the practice. Someone can be *compelled* to observe a practice, rule, or standard, but this would convert it into an external good. Without an internalised and self-determined desire to commit and excel there are no incentives for anyone to respect the standards or obey the rules. And if this is the case then there is no foundation for the development of MacIntyre's 'virtues'.

This problem is not present in Kekes, and is not inherent to the notion of internal goods, simply to MacIntyre's usage of it. He has an aversion, or is highly sceptical, towards any individualistic notions of eudaimonia / well-being, that 'one's way should be one's own'. His objection presumably stems from his conceiving of self-

determination, self-realization, and authenticity in liberal terms, as expressions of emotivism. But also, presumably, because his theory is exclusively *social*, having abandoned the '*natural*' along with Aristotle's 'metaphysical biology'.

That MacIntyre's theory needs to retrieve the individual and the natural is apparent not only from his mechanistic conception of internal goods, but also from his notion of 'narrative unity'.

### **MacIntyre's Narrative Unity.**

MacIntyre attempts to restore the ideas of Aristotelian teleology and the virtues, divested of 'metaphysical biology', by introducing to the modern age a social teleology, the idea of the narrative unity. Humans and the communities they forge are governed by a narrative unity ; we live our lives through a narrative structure. Against the understanding of the self as essentially a decider and chooser MacIntyre suggests -

'man is in his actions and practice...essentially a story-telling animal ....the key question for men is not about their own authorship ; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'of what story or stories do I find myself a part ?' We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters - roles into which we have been drafted - and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed'.  
(MacIntyre 1985 219)

The unity of the narrative quest has to be located in a social context, because only this gives substance to a persons life, and this social context is unchosen. Personal identity is inseparable from a social identity which is at least partly given in advance of any decisions or choices made. A narrative understanding of the self is so called because it suggests that answers to questions about what we ought to do involve not merely choosing what to do as individuals but also, and essentially, discovering who we are in relation to others. To understand what it is that I ought to do I must recognize that the story of my life possesses a certain narrative structure in which what I am now is continuous with what I was in the past. Thus the search for what I

am , and for what I ought to do, is indeed a search and not simply a set of decisions. It is this search, this quest, which is essential to the unity of a person's life. Questions about the good life do not require us to make a judgement about what sort of person we wish to be , but rather to discover who we already are : not 'what should I be, what sort of life should I lead ?', but 'who am I ?' - a process of discovery, not choice.

The danger of such social roles eclipsing individual identity is offset by MacIntyre's inclusion of autonomy within the narrative unity, so that roles can be questioned. There are constraints on how the story can continue, but *within those constraints there are indefinitely many ways in which it can continue*. The model he espouses is Athenian autonomy, perhaps epitomized by Socrates who challenged Athenian laws and standards but, in the end, in recognition of the social context that bound, defined, and gave meaning to his life, accepted death rather than escape. Through such autonomy a person escapes emotivism and can question his life *by having some criterion outside himself by which to decide among possible choices*.

It is this narrative form that provides the framework within which we can attempt to make rational choices concerning the conflicting demands of different practices. So we must not ask -

'which internal goods are best', but rather '**which matter most to me**' ? or 'which decision will introduce or maintain the shape which my life has begun to develop'. (MacIntyre 1985 210)

Who am I really - a chess player or spouse ? A decision may never come to seem clearly right or wrong, or will only do so in retrospect. But what ultimately provides the answer is the shape your life took as a result of that decision - its subsequent *unity, depth, and coherence*. To ask 'what is the good for me' is to ask how best I might live out that narrative unity and bring it to completion. And the good for humans is what all the answers to that question have in common. The asking of the question is as important to an individual's success in living the good life for humans as the specific answers which may/may not emerge. It is the systematic asking of these two questions and the attempt to answer them in theory and action which provide the moral life with its unity - the unity of a narrative quest for the good. Such a quest is a search for a conception of *the* good life that -

- enables us to order the other goods in our life.

- enables us to extend our understanding of the purpose and content of the virtues.
- enables us to understand the place of integrity and constancy in life.

The goal of the quest is not separable from the quest itself, for it is only in the course of the quest, and in coping with the events that threaten such a project, that its goal is finally to be understood. *The quest educates the person engaged upon it, both as to the character of what is sought and in self-knowledge.* The good life for humans is a life spent searching for the good life.

MacIntyre's notion of a 'quest for narrative unity' re-instates the individual, and in ways which reinforce my point at the end of the previous section. His socially embedded individual seems to retain ample scope for relatively autonomous questing e.g. within practices and traditions there is necessary opportunity for conflict and dialogue ; practices and traditions are themselves many and varied – the social context is diverse and pluralistic ; within the social constraints there are 'indefinitely many ways in which to continue' ; when making choices and decisions do not ask 'which internal goods are best, but which matter most to me', etc. The quest for '*narrative unity*', its self-developmental preoccupation with self-reflection, self-education, and self-knowledge, its focus on the development of the virtues, and its concern with the questions of 'what is good for me and for others', all bear the hallmarks of a search for *ontological wholeness*, '*authenticity as coherence*' as it was referred to in the previous Chapter.

As with Taylor's view of 'social authenticity', what MacIntyre's theory might allow is personal autonomy / reflexivity within a public order of standards and evaluations, a publicly established order of references to rely on as '*the given*'. But the latter is precisely what 'questing', relatively autonomous, persons will, sooner or later, want to make explicit. It might be that the purpose of reflection is merely to bring the self voluntarily into conformity with the given aims, attachments, rules, and roles of practices and traditions by reflexively internalising their sanctions and boundaries. But MacIntyre implies more than this. And once it is conceded that self reflexivity exists then any assured embeddedness in social roles and rules ends. With self-reflection comes distance and alternative options. MacIntyre, like Taylor, might sidestep this by asserting that we cannot think outside the context of practices and traditions, so that reflexivity will always remain within this 'social' paradigm, but



this assertion raises more problems than it solves. It can be argued that if practices and traditions are *automatically* constitutive of agency then they are *without commitment* – external goods. The basis of *commitment* is self reflectivity – the person can commit to practices, to the roles and rules of the group, to society or, alternatively, censure, critique, and depart from the group.

Which takes us back to the concluding point of the previous section. MacIntyre's aversion to emotivism pushes him to the opposite extreme – the objective standard of a 'social' authority, and this then undermines his conception of 'internal goods'. Engagement in a social practice, acceptance of its tradition, must be in some way self-motivated, so that the individual is in some way self-determined and self-realized by engaging in the practice. For it not to be so would mean that commitment to the practice emerges from submission to authority, or is manipulated, or is in some similar fashion instrumental, so that *external goods* become the primary incentive and motivation for engaging in the practice. Without an internalised and self-determined desire to commit and excel there are no incentives for anyone to respect the standards or obey the rules, and there is then no foundation for the development of MacIntyre's 'virtues'.

In MacIntyre's more recent work (1999), the notion of 'narrative quest and unity' is downplayed. But he now seeks to re-instate the '*natural*': that internal goods are not only 'social', but must also be viewed in terms of 'human nature' and a species-typical notion of human flourishing – that ethics without biology is impossible. Thus, the idea of the good implicit in the notion of human flourishing is species relative. MacIntyre does not talk about *self*-realization, but about the realization of species-relative capacities, similar to the 'general concept' of self-realization of the previous Chapter. Thus, internal goods of practices are now based on a natural and social foundation, but the *individual* remains absent. Until it is included, the place of internal goods in his theory remains lifeless and emasculated, unable to do the work his theory needs it to do.



## J.S. MILL.

Macintyre notes of Mill –

“Utilitarianism cannot accommodate the distinction between goods internal and goods external to a practice ....nonetheless....something like this is the distinction which he was trying to make .... when he distinguished between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ pleasures....the notion that the pursuit of excellence in a way that extends human powers is at the heart of human life is instantly recognizable as at home in ...J.S.Mill’s political and social thought ”. (MacIntyre 1985, p199)

What I want to do here is make this connection between Mill and internal and external goods.

Those who argue that we should be free to choose our own plan of life often do so on the grounds that which way of life is ‘best’ is a subjective matter to which there is no right answer. Clearly, this is not Mill’s position – he is an ‘*individual perfectionist*’. Mill certainly believes that there is more than *one* right answer to this question - which way of life is right for a given individual depends on the specifics of their circumstances and character - but he does not believe that *all* answers are equally right. There are truths concerning the nature of the good life just as there are truths on other matters. The argument for individual liberty is partly that no one can claim to know with certainty what these truths are, hence the need for further ‘experiments in living’ and for the truth of one opinion to be tested against alternative views. Mill believes that each individual possesses her own unique potential for self-development. Thus, playing an active role in choosing one’s own plan of life is a vital ingredient in any fully human life. It is because Mill is himself so sure on this last point that he believes that individuals should be free to follow their own inclinations, choose their own plan of life, even if this means that they are likely to make mistakes. The purpose of liberty as non-interference is to foster those developmental virtues of creativity, self assertion, and individuality which Mill believes a free society nourishes, and which are characteristic of internal goods. Without a presumption in favour of individual liberty many of our most human qualities will wither and die : individual judgement, vigour, discrimination, choice,

character, and originality. These qualities, which challenge custom, conformity, and oppression, demand an area sacred to the individual as a condition for their full development. For Mill our chief goal must be the highest and most harmonious development of our powers. The good life is not a life of passive enjoyment but rather a life in which our powers are developed and exercised to the full. The goal of self-development is individuality, and the route to individuality is via internal rather than external goods.

Jeremy Bentham had argued that nature placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters: pain and pleasure. With this he attempted to ground all claims about human motivation and also account for how all the ends of human action can be valuable – the ‘Greatest Happiness Principle’ : that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. In so arguing, Bentham established psychological hedonism as the core motivational theory of subsequent utilitarianism. Mill endorsed this basic position unequivocally : in *Utilitarianism* he wrote -

‘that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as a means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain’ (Mill 1991, p.137).

However, whereas Bentham was prepared to concede that, pleasure for pleasure, ‘pushpin was as good as poetry’, Mill was sensitive to the charge that this kind of naturalistic reductionism reduced mankind to no better than pigs. For Bentham, happiness is identical with utility – pleasure and the avoidance of pain – and he equates this with what are in effect ‘*external goods*’ –

‘good....profit...convenience...advantage, benefit, and emolument’ (Mill 1991, p 160).

All pleasures and pains can be put on a single scale of quantity – their intensity and duration - and measured against each other. The aim of life is to maximise the quantity of pleasure : more pleasure is better than less, regardless of the particular quality or kind of pleasure involved. Bentham’s point is that some kind of cardinal ranking of pleasure is possible. Enough pig- like comforts must ultimately outweigh

the pleasures of intellectual discovery, artistic creativity, or moral heroism. If humans were given enough swinish pleasures - food, warmth, sex, and sleep - this would outweigh whatever good they might forgo in terms of their liberty, creativity, and individuality.

Mill wants to reject this 'Benthamite' view while accepting the basic terms of psychological hedonism and without having to concede the charge that this reduces mankind to no better than swine. He attempts to broaden and deepen the utilitarian account of human life by insisting that the quality – the kind – of pleasure, and not just its quantity, must be an essential ingredient of moral thought. He distinguishes 'higher' from 'lower' pleasures, and argues that a life involving the higher pleasures is preferable to a life confined to the lower pleasures –

'it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied ; better be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'. (Mill 1991, p140).

Mill insists that considerations of *quality* also represent an aspect of pleasurable mental states that help determine their value : there is more to the value of pleasure than mere intensity and duration ; facts about *kinds* of pleasure also matter – some pleasures are more valuable in kind. Mill's version of '*qualitative hedonism*' is designed to reflect this – not only intensity and duration but also facts about the very nature of the pleasure, its quality as a pleasurable experience, are good-making features of such states. Mill constantly refers to the higher pleasures as being those that manifest the elevated capacities of human intellect and creativity. Indeed he largely contrasts the higher pleasures with sensual pleasures.

'Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when once made conscious of them do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification'.(Mill 1991, p138).

The pursuit of happiness is now a pursuit of higher pleasures. Since happiness is of different kinds and these different kinds vary in value, humans must understand their natures to discover the sort of happiness particularly appropriate to them. Mill claims that the forms of happiness rooted in human nature, as opposed to those rooted in the nature shared with other animals, are more valuable. The good of humans with a

mental and moral nature, with intellectual, moral, and social capacities, requires the development and exercise of these aspects of their nature. Happiness is intimately connected with the development of generic human capacities and the autonomous search for individual mixes of these.

Mill's basic purpose here is to insist that we must recognize something more in human nature than its merely physical part. The bodily and sensual side of our nature constitutes the lowest level of conscious life – that aspect of our nature that we share with other animals. If this is taken to be the whole of what defines humans then the happy pig or satisfied fool would have the best of all possible worlds, with all their needs satisfied. Mill insists that there is more to humans than this ; that genuine happiness and real human fulfilment must be distinguished from mere pleasure and contentment ; and that the exercise of the higher, intellectual, faculties does not necessarily lead to the latter. Throughout history, accounts of human flourishing have involved more than sensuality or material gratification. Many human purposes and goals involve considerable hardship and sacrifice, yet they remain human goods.

As Berger puts it, according to Mill –

“the ultimate criterion of the value of all actions .....is what is requisite for the happiness of man as a creature of elevated faculties ; human well-being - given human capacities - requires some particular elements” (Donner 1991 p119).

Mill reflects on the conditions it would take to make -

“human life happy, both in the comparatively humble sense of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning of rendering life .....such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have” (Donner 1991, p120)

Now it is Mill's argument that people prefer a life which satisfies their higher faculties and which leads to the higher pleasures, even if this involves some sacrifice of mere quantity of pleasure experienced.

‘Less of a higher kind is preferable to more of a lower’, he says; and, ‘a being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy . . . than one of an inferior type; but . . . he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence’ (Mill 1991, p139).

If 'it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied ; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied', then happiness, in its utilitarian sense of pleasure, is no longer the only thing desirable. As his critics have repeatedly said, the picture which Mill has of the genuinely happy life, as a life involving the use of the higher faculties even when this involves pain and discontent, cannot be reconciled with the principle of utility. However, as Sayers (1998, p 15) points out, critics have concentrated almost exclusively on this inconsistency of Mill, and only minimal attention has been given to the *content* of his distinction and to the point which he is trying to make with it. Happiness - human well-being and fulfilment - is, for Mill, a much wider and more inclusive notion than that of the greatest sum of pleasures. Quite simply, Mill's higher pleasures are not mere *pleasures* at all – he departs entirely from the hedonism of traditional utilitarianism. As Sayers (1998, p20) suggests, Mill's notion is more akin to the non-hedonist one of '*self-realization*'; it involves the full development and active exercise of our highest faculties and powers. This view pervades the whole of Mill's political and social philosophy, and also distinguishes it from liberal individualism.

With the consideration of individuality as an end in itself, Mill departs from the classical utilitarian definition of happiness as the only criterion for judging the good, and acknowledges the existence of a certain moral good not dependent on the principles of pain and pleasure. There are things that have an objective higher value than others. His notion of individuality clearly lacks the neutrality assigned by the classical utilitarian doctrine to the means towards happiness. In transforming what ought to be means into part of the end of happiness, the role of happiness as the sole moral criterion for judging the good and the bad is lost.

Mill did not believe that the degree of desirability of something is proportional to the extent to which it is actually desired as an end. He placed a high intrinsic value on individuality in the full knowledge that there was too little appreciation of it, and too little desire for it. This value of individuality did not depend on the degree of satisfaction it yielded, but on *its development of certain capacities*. And the development of these capacities is valued in itself and not as a means to the satisfaction of desires. It is self-development, and not the mere satisfaction of desire,



that Mill valued. Those who do not develop their individuality have strong desires to conform unthinkingly to a certain way of life, and Mill believed that their desires should be satisfied so long as there is no harm to others, but he did not place a high value on the satisfaction of these desires. Ryan notes that –

“Mill’s concern with self-development...is a strand in his philosophy to which almost everything else is subordinate” (Donner 1991, p1).

Donner concurs –

“self-development...the development and use of our human capacities is a crucial component of the most valuable forms of happiness” (Donner 1991, p1)

Wolff (1968, p141) argues that Mill presents liberty as instrumentally valuable, as *a means to self development and improvement*, and where it fails to have that effect (e.g. children) there is no case for liberty. Liberty is only intrinsically good when it adds to our happiness, but then it is part of happiness rather than an independent value. Which seems to imply that ‘*self-development and improvement*’ is the route to happiness.

As Anschutz comments –

‘In asserting the reality of human individuality, Mill denies its reducibility to pleasures and pains or to anything else; in asserting the absolute importance of self-development he identifies the well-being of the individual with a sort of well-doing very different from the passive happiness of Bentham .....the utilitarianism in which Mill really believes has little to do with happiness and nothing at all with pleasure’ (Anschutz 1963, 18-20).

Berger (1984) suggests that freedom and individuality are valuable for Mill even when they do not promote pleasure because happiness, and not pleasure, is Mill’s ultimate standard of value. His concept of happiness is related to the development of people’s ‘higher faculties’, and there is a diversity of different ingredients of happiness. Autonomy is one element of human happiness, and living an autonomous life requires freedom to choose one’s life plans and to develop one’s capacities.

Thus, as Ten (1980) argues, the goal of happiness for Mill is not really detachable from the growth of individuality, and liberty is to be valued because it is a logically necessary condition for the growth of individuality. It seems clear that the ultimate goal is not really happiness in any sense that is detachable from the growth of

individuality, and that Mill's 'Utility in the largest sense' refers to the development of individuality and its associated pleasures.

R. S. Downie re-states Mill's qualitative distinction between pleasures as a distinction between *activities* -

"a higher value can be set on some activities than on others, not for the amount of pleasure they produce but for their ability to deepen a person's individuality and so help him to develop himself" (Downie 1966, p70).

Mill's qualitative 'higher pleasures' in effect refer to activities which are developmental, specifically those which develop individuality, the processes of autonomy and authenticity which begin with self-culture and choice. In contrast, 'lower pleasures' are those activities which are non-developmental and do not deepen a person's individuality. This 'developmental individuality' focus is paralleled by Mill's scepticism about a particular view of economic and social life -

'I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that trampling, crushing, elbowing and treading on each others heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind, or any but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress' (*Essays on Unsettled Questions* 1844)

It seems clear that Mill's theory does not embrace the external goods of '*possessive individualism*', he does not regard humans as primarily acquisitors or consumers, ever seeking control over more and more resources, including other people, to satisfy their desires for property. People do not live to acquire property, and too much focus on property is demeaning and can interfere with the increase in welfare that actually results from human development. Thus Mill's theory does not promote acquisitiveness and Lockean property rights, nor does it assume isolated individuals lacking social bonds. Instead it is centred around the value he places on the individual as the generator, focus, and appraiser of value. Mill sees individuality as flowing from the development and use of higher human powers, which is antagonistic to a desire to control others. Value is located in each and every individual, and must be respected and treated in a manner appropriate to such a bearer of worth, allowing particular patterns of value to emerge and flourish.

“The power of compelling others...is not only inconsistent with the freedom and development of all the rest, but corrupting to the strong man himself”. (Donner 1991 p130).

“...the love of power and the love of liberty are in eternal antagonism...The desire of power over others can only cease to be a depraving agency among mankind, when each of them individually is able to do without it”. (Donner 1991, p 130).

Thus, the elitist view that the more developed are justified in fixing the value choices for society and imposing them on the less developed is self-defeating on Mill's principles and contradicts Mill's view of how development is achieved. Self-developing adults are in the best position to know what will advance or impede their development and which activities and pursuits are in harmony with our nature. Any attempt to impose values or pursuits on us, even in the name of better values only serves to short circuit our self-development, which must unfold from within.

Mill's 'self-determination' is inseparably tied up with his 'higher pleasures', the two together seeming to be essentially about self-realization, about the extent to which activities develop capacities and potentials which deepen a person's individuality and so help him to develop himself. In other words, *self*-development, by one's own *creative* activity, and not simply development as such, is the greatest good. Inflicted poetry might cause someone to develop, but not to *self*-develop – better the fool satisfied than *forced* to become a dissatisfied Socrates. In this sense, free choice-making is important not simply as an expression of freedom but because the act of choice, and the reflection, deliberation, decision-making, and responsibility it entails, develops capacities, it's about self-development. Such '*self-activity*' combines the notions of free (self-determined) activity with that of creative (self-realizing) activity – not controlled by outside alien forces but directed by oneself.

## **CONCLUSION ON INTERNAL GOODS.**

To return to our discussion at the beginning of this Chapter about objective and subjective standards of the good. A substantive account of the good must include in it satisfactions universally required for all good lives, regardless of contexts. These are

the satisfactions of the wants created by the natural, social, and individual. The suggestion here is that internal and external goods satisfies both an objective and subjective standard. The condition to aim at is a life rich in internal goods and with a just share of external goods. Both are necessary, but internal goods are primary. In seeking external goods we may do whatever our conceptions of good lives require, as long as we do not violate unconditional commitments to internal goods.

Earlier in the Chapter it was suggested that it is reasonable to assume that internal goods will confer certain rewards to those involved -

1. the satisfaction of knowing one is learning well or has succeeded in becoming a good practitioner, in an activity one is committed to.
2. the pleasures taken in exercising and developing ones capacities and skills
3. something to be valued, both for its own sake, but also because it contributes to a wider good.

Thus, internal goods generate internal value : they are things committed to for their own sake - an activity, a relationship, a standard / rule / principle, committed to (consciously or not) because, for example, they –

1. develop, or express, or create new, capacities and abilities.
2. enable the creative use of ones capacities and abilities.
3. empower, confer control, enhance self-determination.
4. serve to realize chosen projects.
5. generate intrinsic satisfaction.
6. contribute to a valued standard.

There is therefore a connection between internal goods as described above and the praxis or *self-activity* that underlie self-realization and authenticity discussed in the previous Chapter. Collectively, they also seem to be what Mill means by *individuality*. Internal goods are satisfactions involved in the successful development and exercise of some of our capacities and dispositions in the context of a way of life to which we have committed ourselves.

As suggested earlier, a motive for utilising the internal and external goods distinction is that it directly confronts the issue of capitalism and capitalist culture. The latter is generally critiqued for being materialistic and consumerist, whilst its economic production values are driven by profit and efficiency. Its ethos is one of *external*

*goods*, and this has consequences for the types of character and conceptions of the good that prevail in capitalist societies.

One of the significant blind-spots of liberalism in general is its bias to systems of economic *distribution* rather than *production*. But what people *do*, and not simply what they *get*, is a relevant consideration to conceptions of the good : whether the means used to generate the resources to be distributed, the system of production and production relations, is conducive to a good life. What many people *do*, and their ability to realize their conception of the good, is powerfully influenced by capitalist systems of economic production and the issues of efficiency, profit, funding, and ‘managerialism’, etc, that arise within it. The market is both a mechanism of distribution and a way of organizing production, it is a particular way of relating individuals to one another as they engage in one of the central activities of their common life. A social structure based upon market relations leads to the development of particular types of production, job design, and work relations; particular types of individual preferences and desires ; and particular types of individual character. So any assessment of the market must be not only in terms of how well it satisfies given preferences, but also in terms of : *what preferences* it generates; *what types of character*, and interpersonal relations, it fosters; *what type* of jobs and work relations it creates ; are internal or external goods the priority ?

Liberalism is evasive on these questions, and this reflects its objectively symbiotic, but subjectively ambiguous, relationship to capitalism. Given the historical and contemporary relationship between liberalism and capitalism it would be reasonable to assume that such an economic system is a fundamental and taken for granted feature of the liberal conception of the Right – certainly it is typically taken as a given. However, Dworkin suggests that a commitment to economic growth and to capitalist economic relations - positions generally thought to be *constitutive* of liberalism - are in fact *derivative* liberal positions, not central to liberalism. He nevertheless concedes that in practice liberalism has endorsed capitalism and economic growth as the best route to enabling people to pursue their own conceptions of the good, and his own focus remains on patterns of distribution, to the neglect of production. (Dworkin 1978; Neal 1997, p15).



This feigned ambivalence perhaps illustrates the issue : the symbiosis between liberalism and capitalism is such that it does not recognize the problem of the relationship between internal and external goods. This is probably unfair, and certainly the examples of Mill, T.H.Green, and others, would suggest so. But they are exceptions, and the prevailing liberal-consensus is to diagnose, interpret, and seek to solve issues and problems as though they are entirely a matter of the distribution of external goods.

For individuality, *both* types of goods are potential sources of pleasure or satisfaction and, thereby, can be bound up with an individual's own identity and interests, but internal goods are primary.

## CHAPTER 7 : THE MORAL SELF.

In much of contemporary moral philosophy concern for one's own interests is considered a non-moral issue, while concern for the interests of others is paradigmatically moral. Morality is generally considered to be '*other regarding*', concerning only our actions that affect others - that we should not frustrate others' desires or interfere with their freedom in whatever ways are at present culturally regarded as being harmful (Hampton 1997 p21, Rogers, 1997 p1). Rogers refers to it as a 'self-other model' : an action has no moral worth unless it benefits others, and not even then unless it is motivated by altruism rather than selfishness. Morality and self-interest are portrayed as diametrically opposed : people are '*naturally*' self-interested and / or *social* and cultural forms foster the pursuit of self-interest, so the job of morality is to counter-balance this with an 'other-regarding' emphasis. This is concerned with the proper balance between prudence and morality, between the pursuit of one's own good and the pursuit of the good of others : should one weigh one's interests more heavily than those of others; are there self-regarding reasons for helping others ?

There are numerous puzzling and problematic aspects to this whole approach. The egoism / altruism issue was touched on in Chapter 2 as part of the discussion of ethical autonomy, and it is not directly returned to here. Perhaps the biggest puzzle is that if morality is 'other-regarding' then where is this 'other-regarding' concern supposed to emanate from, what is its origin, how does it develop - is it something *natural* that we all do or might have, or a *social* product, or an *individual* capacity possessed by some but absent in others ? The argument in this Chapter is not a rejection of the view that morality should be 'other-regarding', but a rejection of the view that this is *all* it should be, and therefore a rejection of what seems to be its one-sidedness. What it seems to lack is a foundation in 'self-regarding' morality, a recognition that the self- and other-regarding are symbiotic. How one has in the past, or does now, relate to others, is influenced by how others have and do relate to you. One's perception of oneself, one's sense of self-worth, self-respect, and security are all relevant to one's interpersonal interactions, and these will have been influenced by

how others relate to you, and will in turn influence how you relate to others. Similarly, all of this will have, and will continue to be, influenced by both natural and social forces, not the least being the socially approved pursuit of one's own self-interest.

So the particular weakness of modern morality which is our focus here is that its preoccupation with other-regarding morality is paralleled by its neglect of the 'self-regarding'. The self- and other-regarding are viewed as separate spheres, each with its own dynamic, and modern morality says little about what we should choose for ourselves, or how we should act in relation to ourselves, in the self-regarding sphere. As such, it provides no basis for a 'moral self'. (Hurka 1993, p5). This was presented in Chapter 2 as a relation between 'ethical autonomy' and 'moral autonomy'. What modern moral theory and social practices seem to lack, but ethical autonomy highlights, is a recognition that the exercise of moral agency must involve a certain kind of *self-valuing* and individual moral development as its foundation, what Aristotle called (misleadingly) '*love of self*', and Plato '*caring for the soul*'. It was suggested in the previous Chapter that the conception of the good to aim at is a life rich in *internal goods* and with a *just* share of external goods. For Aristotle, 'internal goods' are '*goods of the soul*'; for Plato, 'self-valuing' is '*caring for the soul*', and these references help to diagnose the problem. The problem of modern morality is that it is an *external good* rather than an *internal good* – it is instrumental and/or imposed, external to the individual's *culturally endorsed* pursuit of his own self-interest, his own conception of the good, and thereby always fragile. The self-regarding and the other-regarding are at odds, and the 'sphere' of the 'self-regarding' is neglected.

Individuality's starting point for morality is different, it begins with the self -

"Friendly relations with one's neighbours.....seem to have proceeded from a man's relations to himself". (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a 1-3).

"This above all : to thine own self be true. And it doth follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man". (Shakespeare, ('Hamlet')).

"Not before a man can say 'I' .....can he say 'Thou' ". (Buber 1973, 145).

This 'self-other' relationship – that 'authentic' relationships with others depend upon an authentic relation with oneself - also seems well-established within psychoanalysis (Chazan 1998, Chapter 4; Ferrara 1998, Chapter 5). Similarly for Aristotle, the relation that a virtuous person has to her own self has a priority over her capacity to relate to others in the way that a virtuous person does. The value that an agent places on her own self is of central importance in explaining her moral outlook. The state of a person's self and the moral status of her actions are interdependent. The limit a person has on what he is prepared to do in pursuing his ends is not only closely connected with his own view of himself, but also causally dependent on the very sense he has of his own worth. And the value we place on ourselves, our sense of our own worth, will be powerfully influenced by social structures and culture.

To understand this position some recapping and clarification seems necessary.

## **INVIOABILITY AND THE SELF-REGARDING.**

In Chapter 2 we saw how Johnston describes moral autonomy in liberal terms as existing when a person has an effective sense of justice – recognizes that *others* are agents like himself, with projects and values of their own, and that these may impose limits on the things he can do in pursuit of his own projects and values if these would affect others negatively. A lack of moral autonomy is an inability to think of other humans as anything other than objects that are available to be used for one's own purposes. Johnston also suggests that one can be personally autonomous without being morally autonomous. Individuals are self-interested agents pursuing their own conceptions of the good; pursuit of self-interest is culturally endorsed; moral autonomy is not necessarily valued; so the State must play a role in ensuring morality and 'fairness'. So the components and connections in the liberal model would be along the following lines -

individual ----- agency - - - - moral autonomy ----- State / Right.

So, the reason why morality is generally regarded as being *other-regarding* is because this is precisely what it is in this model ; in a liberal world concern for others

is optional and at risk, and so its importance is stressed out of necessity. It was suggested in Chapter 2 that this liberal model was a limited view of morality, lacking substance. Mill refers to it as a '*petite morale*', and Norton as a '*moral minimalism*'. An 'individuality' model is more *comprehensive* -

inviolability == individual === ethical === personal === moral  
autonomy                      autonomy                      autonomy

The argument in Chapter 2 was that if we affirm the intrinsic value of individuals, and certainly liberalism does, then we must accept the view that *individuals have responsibilities towards themselves* as well as others – not just to respect others, but also to respect ones own inviolability. The independent value of the individual trumps what is of value to individuals. Inviolability is *not optional*. An immediate consequence of this argument is that inviolability values and thereby enables personal autonomy, whilst simultaneously constraining it : that ones own conception of the good must respect those characteristics that constitute *ones own* inviolability. The problem for liberals is that *the inviolability of the individual is not compatible with the parallel liberal value of the inviolability of a private sphere* – the liberal '*self-ownership*' thesis – where inviolability is indeed optional. The second part of this argument is that the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding' are interdependent. Inviolability applies both intra- and inter-personally, there is a symmetry between self- and other-regarding principles, and that other-regarding responsibilities may be committed to in only a *minimalist* way if not matched by any robust commitment to self-regarding ones.

Thus, the starting point for individuality is that inviolability is *non-optional*, and this leads into the notion of 'ethical autonomy', which is the foundation for self-determination / personal autonomy, self-realization and authenticity, etc. The capacity for *moral autonomy* follows upon 'ethical autonomy' : if the latter is absent or weak then so will moral autonomy be absent or weak, a sort of *moral minimalism*, and so the State will be required to enforce a moral standard – as in the case of the liberal Right, and moral theorists will define morality as being 'other-regarding'. Ethical autonomy is the basis for moral autonomy. But whether it exists as the norm,



or as a struggling and stunted thing, will be shaped by whether it is culturally expected and endorsed.

## **MORAL SELF AND ETHICAL AUTONOMY.**

To understand what is meant by a moral self we need some background. A moral self is one who desires to have the best life possible, a life rich in *internal goods* and with a *just* share of external goods. This is the self's *own interest*, and there is a connection between what is good for the agent in this sense and what is morally good, a connection between morality and the goodness of a human life. The starting point for a conception of the moral self must be the recognition that the range of the ethical should include any concerns that might arise in response to the question of how one should live. Following from this is the acknowledgement that the 'self-regarding' (the 'ethical') and the 'other-regarding' (the 'moral') are interdependent and symbiotic.

From this starting point, the first underlying principle of the moral self is the notion of individual *inviolability*, of 'human dignity'. Integral to the latter is MacPherson's '*developmental power*', '*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*'. As discussed in Chapter 2, to be human is to innately possess *potential worth*, and to have an *interest* in, and bear the moral *responsibility* for, creating, developing, or realizing this worth, via 'self-determination' and 'self-realization'. The 'rights' of individuals follow from this responsibility, and such rights must be respected because this respect is a necessary condition for maximising the realization of potential human value. This trio of concepts form the constituents, or melting pot, for *ethical autonomy*, and the four together are developed and expressed through *internal goods*. Collectively they are the foundation, and expression, of a moral self and moral autonomy.

From the start of this process, whether as an individual or as a species, we have capacities and potentials but are vulnerable, and our development is dependent upon others and the natural and social world we are born in to. What those others, and society, do to us, whether they enable or constrain, is crucial to how we develop, so from the beginning this is a *political* and *moral* situation – whether power is exercised morally. In the terms of Rogers discussed in Chapter 5 it is an issue of

'positive regard' or 'conditional positive regard', of Buber's 'I'-*It* or 'I'-*Thou* relations. Respect for self and others is a response to actual or potential worth, and rights are means for the development by individuals of this worth. Self-determination is integral to the process, but the possibility of pursuing 'a life of one's own' requires a deep-seated respect from others for one's individual agency and autonomy, an equal social recognition of the capacity for individuality, and this requires something stronger than an 'other-regarding' morality that is external to the individual. Similarly, to ignore the autonomy of others, to deny them concern and respect, would be to simultaneously condone those others doing likewise to you, and thereby undermine the foundations of one's own autonomy.

Central to this process, and the heart of the moral self, is 'ethical autonomy'. As discussed in Chapter 2 it concerns how one should behave towards oneself, and specifically with what one's good consists in, what would contribute to one's well-being or fulfilment. Do we relate to ourselves in an 'I'-*It* or 'I'-*I*, *amour de soi* or *amour propre*, fashion. It involves or requires an ongoing process of 'self-creative' activity, the 'self-activity' and *praxis* discussed in previous Chapters, an *activity* rather than *passivity*, and this develops self-worth, a self-valuing.

It requires that one's ethical and moral principles are one's 'own', rooted in one's own character and commitments rather than conformism or compliance. In contrast, for example, for *pride* and *self-esteem* the source is the external environment, comprised of the recognition and attentions of others. For the ethical self, and self-valuation, the values which one incorporates into one's life are not *derived* values (or values dictated by others) but values grounded in one's own reflective evaluation and understanding. There is a process of self-valuing which comes with the experience one has of a capacity to shape one's self, according to what is found in the circumstances before one to be of ultimate importance. Within immovable constraints there is a self-determination of one's own self, and in so doing we shape our own experience according to what we find to be worthwhile and possible. We discover that the capacity we have to choose is a potential and a possibility, and while not being indifferent to the opinions of others we develop the courage to resist their promptings and pressures. So ethical autonomy, and the self-valuing it

involves, includes the person's active constitution of herself in the world, the ethically autonomous *person is involved in a continuous self-creative activity*, an acknowledgement of an ethical and ontological commitment to *make* something of one's self. And this is morality as an internal good. In this sense, the ethically autonomous person does not experience herself as a mere possessor of certain qualities and achievements, as might a person who is merely proud of these, but rather as a self-originating author who is capable of creating what she is. While pride requires a possession of estimable properties, ethical autonomy requires that these be ones that the possessor has chosen as qualities it would be valuable and worthwhile to cultivate, since they fit what she conceives a good life to consist of. The valuing of qualities and achievements follows from a person's making himself into one with those qualities (She value her skills because their *development* is the result of her own efforts, evaluations and choosing). It is this process of *self-creation and self-determination*, and not the attributes and character traits that may be the result of the process, that is involved in the development of self-valuing. In this sense, what there is to *love* about the self is the making of that self and what this self has made from her capacities and potentials, her own choices and effort.

Individuality suggests that it is on this foundation of 'ethical autonomy', of 'self-valuing', of the 'self-regarding', that moral autonomy develops. To repeat Buber – 'Not before a man can say I in perfect reality... can he in perfect reality say Thou' As Chazan expresses it –

"the moral self values itself not as the result of social and cultural forces over which it has little control, but rather for what it makes of itself. A person needs to have the psychic capacity to be able to avoid simply accommodating his self to the opinions and evaluations of others, and so to avoid valuing himself simply by means of a reflected image of his qualities and achievements, in order to have the capacity for virtue. As moral beings we esteem ourselves, not for how others see us, or for how our selves happen to have become constituted. Our moral self-constitution must be seen by us to be a manifestation of our own agency in order for it to be a source of what I have termed 'love of self'". (Chazan 1998, p198)

The classic story of ethical autonomy's absence is Tolstoy's Ivan Illych. Illych's qualities and achievements gave him feelings of self-worth, but on his deathbed he does not evaluate his own self positively. Illych had colluded with, and allowed himself to be carried along by, certain causes which had decided for him what he

would be. He had tolerated being acted on by causes which had determined how he would conduct himself in his life. Tolstoy implies that Illych did not *choose* his own life, despite the fact that he made all sorts of important decisions regarding it, for these choices and decisions were based on derived values. At no point did *he actively* take responsibility for his own self, its conduct or its achievements. What he allowed himself to become was determined by external forces. In Aristotle's terms, in his striving to 'possess the whole world', he had 'become someone else' (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a). He had not fashioned his own self according to what he himself saw to be of ultimate value, but instead according to what others valued and wanted, so the experience he had of himself was not one from which he could derive good self feelings, so he feels proud of, but alienated from, his own family, talents and achievements.

### **INTERNAL GOODS AND MORAL MINIMALISM.**

Modern moral theory is generally classified as a '*rules morality*' and its fundamental question is : 'How should I act in a given moral situation, what is the right thing to do? The response is to formulate a universally applicable moral principle or law – Hobbes's natural right of self-preservation, Kant's categorical imperative, Bentham's greatest happiness, or Rawls's two principles of justice, together with criteria for distinguishing moral from non-moral situations, etc. Moral conduct is conduct best according with the applicable rules in given moral situations. In contrast, classical ethical theory starts with an altogether different question : 'What kind of person should I be, and what is a good life for a human being', which in turn depends upon an understanding of what a human is, and then turns into an issue of individual moral development and becomes an 'ethics of character' (Norton 1991 page x of Preface; Bond 1996, Ch 8). These two approaches cannot be mutually exclusive : 'rules morality' cannot ignore the development of moral character altogether otherwise no one would pay attention to the 'rules' ; similarly, character ethics requires rules to regulate the conduct of those lacking character development. Nevertheless, the difference is a radical one. Character ethics subordinates rules to the development of moral character; rules morality is concerned with the development of moral character only in so far as rule-abiding conduct requires it. So a major difference is



that character ethics demands of individuals a continuous moral growth, whereas rules morality is what Norton (1991, pxi) describes as *minimalist*. He suggests it is *minimalist* for two reasons –

- many ordinary life choices are regarded as being non-moral, so the scope for development of ‘moral character’ is reduced, whereas for ‘character ethics’ the moral situation is *the life of each individual*, where very little is devoid of some moral meaning.
- its understanding of rules as applicable uniformly to everyone : what is right must be such as can be recognized and acted upon by all, regardless of moral character. Moral growth, beyond minimal rules obedience, is required of no one.

This difference between ‘character ethics’ and ‘rules morality’ might be expressed in terms of *internal and external goods* discussed in the previous Chapter.

In liberal individualism justice and public morality are seen to consist in the observance of rules, independent of the motivation which may lead individuals to observe them ; justice and morality are *external* rules followed as a means to realize ones ends, and the ‘rules’ indicate how one must behave in order to be just in one’s relations with others.

This can be contrasted with ‘character ethics’, or individuality. As Crowley suggests (1987, p20), justice or rules must be valued in themselves, must depend on the meaning that practitioners attach to them. Without an internalised desire to commit to the rules or act justly, there is no incentive for anyone to respect the standards or obey the rules. Goods internal to the practice of justice depend on qualities internal to the practitioner – their character and commitment. The standard of just action as a practice will only be observed by those who value the goods internal to that practice. *A man can be compelled to observe a standard or rule, but this converts it to an external good* - observing the standard in order to avoid the application of sanctions. This has important implications for the adequacy of any theory which sees justice as merely rule following which does not engage the whole person. On the liberal view of the law, obedience is reducible to the fear of legal sanctions. The law obliges men to act in certain ways that, in the absence of penalties, they would not consider in



their interest because such actions would not maximize their personal utility. There may often be no reason for valuing the rules as such. Thus, the rules are *external goods*.

It is different with 'rules' as internal goods. The chess player does not respect the standards and rules of chess grudgingly, or to avoid penalties, but because he recognizes they set a standard worth committing to and has an obligation to uphold ; he will often respect a particular standard of play even though he is not obliged to by the rules. When standards or rules are an internal good I respect them not because I am obliged to but because I recognize and accept them as an obligation, because they set a standard I am committed to and therefore accept an obligation to uphold them. This view requires that people have the proper internal perspective on their relations with other members of the community, that they have a desire to judge their own good from the perspective of a common good, that they feel an obligation to respect the standards of just behaviour embodied in the standards of social behaviour. It entails a 'community'.

This brings us back to the issue of inviolability and the self- and other-regarding spheres. Inviolability in the liberal private sphere is optional, private ethics embody a personal conception of the good which is subjective. But in the public sphere the inviolability of others should be respected. But the public and the private are not coextensive, nor do they have any necessary connection - they are separate self-regarding (private) and other-regarding (public) spheres. So the problem is the relationship, transition, and tension, between the two spheres. 'Self-ownership' recognizes no binding duties to self, so the social importance of a critical human capacity (inviolability) can be legitimately ignored by individuals in their self-regarding conduct. But this then undermines inviolability in general : if a morally privileged capacity is to generate inviolability then that capacity would need to have sufficient moral urgency to make it a decisive consideration for individuals in the conduct of their own lives. 'Self-ownership' risks ruling this out. This position of individualism raises a number of overlapping problems with regard to respect for persons (Bird 1999, p188).

(1) If inviolability is never a decisive consideration for individuals in their relations with themselves, why should it be so in their relations with others ? If 'morally

privileged' human capacities can be over-ridden at will when they are attached to oneself, how could they suddenly acquire overwhelming moral significance when attached to others, or to myself in relation to others ? If you do not respect in yourself those characteristics that confer inviolability, then it seems unlikely that you will respect the inviolability of others, if only because your conception of what this means will be limited.

(2) If I am under no special obligation to acknowledge the inviolable significance of my own privileged capacities, could I legitimately invoke their presence in me as the grounds for an inviolable entitlement to certain kinds of respectful treatment from others ? If their presence in me is being taken as the basis for a permanent and inviolable constraint on the actions of all other persons, and for one on my own transactions with them, how can it be that any parallel duties to myself are subject to an absolute veto ?

(3) If the State expects me to respect you because you are possessed of a special moral status, would it not also expect *me* to act in ways worthy of that status ?

(4) If inviolability in the private sphere is optional, then inviolability is also too weak to be used as an argument against external / state interference.

(5) The liberal 'Right', or elements of it, will always be at risk of seeming to be external and imposed - State-led, rather than 'led from the inside'. The initiative for, and commitment to, moral autonomy and toleration will often be external to the self rather than necessarily self-determined, and therefore based on compliance rather than consent. So there will be an ongoing tension, or uneasy truce, between the self-regarding self-interest and 'moral minimalism' of the private sphere on the one hand, and the expected moral autonomy of the other-regarding sphere on the other.

Thus the dilemma for modern morality and liberal individualism is the endemic risk of moral minimalism.

The key points proposed above are –

- (1) One must respect ones own inviolability : this is the starting point for ethical autonomy in the 'self-regarding' sphere, the source of ones own self-valuing and self-worth.

- (2) Ethical autonomy ensures that ones ethical and moral principles are rooted in ones own commitments and character, they are an *internal good*.
- (3) That the self-regarding and other-regarding are interdependent rather than separate spheres.
- (4) That liberal morality is an *external good*, a 'rules morality', a form of moral minimalism, where the inviolability of the self is optional, there is no ethical autonomy, and morality is the fragile outcome of the balance between a self-interested private sphere and a State protected, 'other-regarding', public sphere .

The two key points here are (1) and (3). The remainder of this Chapter is concerned with substantiating or fleshing out these points by focussing on particular theorists who seem to support them or adopt a similar position : Kant, Aristotle, and Mill.

## **KANTIAN INVIOLABILITY AND RESPECT.**

Kant's moral philosophy (Wood 1999; Guyer 2000; Scruton 1982) is the most influential position on the issue of individual inviolability and most contemporary discussions of respect for persons explicitly claim to rely on, develop, or challenge some aspect of his ethics. Kant is unusual in so far as his focus is both *respect for self and for others*, and because he makes the latter dependent upon the former, so he is reviewed in some detail here.

But Kantian inviolability is something of an ideal type, detached from any social context, so its precise meaning and application is open to diverse interpretations, and we return to this issue at the end of this section.

## **Human Dignity as Intrinsic Value.**

At the core of Kant's ethical theory is the claim that humans must be respected because they are ends in themselves. To be an end is to have value; an end in itself is something that has value that is intrinsic, absolute, incomparable, and objective and, as ends in themselves, humans have this distinctive worth, which Kant calls 'dignity'. The moral response that is categorically required by dignity is respect. In Kant's theory of value, dignity is the supreme value and only persons have dignity; thus, our most fundamental moral obligation is to respect persons in virtue of their

dignity as ends in themselves. In arguing for respect for the dignity of persons, Kant explicitly rejects two other conceptions of human value : the aristocratic idea of honour that individuals differentially deserve according to their social rank, individual accomplishments, or moral virtue, and the Hobbesian view that -

“the value or worth of a man is, as of all other things, his price - that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his power - and therefore is not absolute but a thing dependent on the need and judgment of another” (Hobbes 1958 p 79).

In *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785) Kant argues that the worth that a person has is different in kind from the value of other things: other things have a *price*, but persons have *dignity*. While some individuals may have merit or status and deserve honour, all persons have dignity and are owed respect. The dignity humans have is unconditional and independent of position, merit, utility, and the assessment of others. Dignity is also absolute and incomparable worth : it can't be compared with, exchanged for, or replaced by any other value, whereas the very purpose of a price is to establish comparative value. Dignity is objective worth, it is a value that everyone has reason to acknowledge, regardless of their particular desires, and sets firm limits on how one may act in relation to persons. To respect persons is thus to regard them as absolutely, unconditionally, and incomparably valuable, to value them in themselves and not in comparison to others, or insofar as they are valuable to somebody else, or could be useful as a means for furthering some purpose. This is to acknowledge in a practical way that their dignity imposes absolute constraints on our treatment of them. Because we are inclined not to respect persons, not to value them as they ought to be valued, one formulation of the Categorical Imperative, Kant's supreme principle of morality, commands that our actions express due respect for the worth of persons -

‘Act in such a way that you treat humanity, *whether in your own person or the person of any other*, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end.’

Morally right actions are thus those that express respect for persons as ends in themselves, while morally wrong actions are those that express disrespect or contempt for persons by not valuing them as ends in themselves. And it is not simply

actions that matter for respect; for Kant, it is the attitudes and value priorities that lie behind the actions that are morally most significant.

### **Dignity as Agency.**

Commentators generally identify humanity with two closely related aspects of rationality : the capacity to set ends and the capacity to be autonomous, both of which are capacities to be a moral agent. Kant maintains that all rational beings necessarily attribute this value to themselves and that they must, on reflection, acknowledge that every other rational being has the same value and on the same grounds: because of the rational nature that is common to all persons. It is thus not as members of the biological species *homo sapiens* that human beings have dignity and so are owed respect, but as rational beings who are capable of moral agency.

### **Dignity as Equality.**

There are several important consequences of this view regarding the scope of respect for persons.

*Firstly*, dignity is in no way conditional on how well or badly those capacities are exercised, on whether a person acts morally or has a morally good character or not. Dignity cannot be diminished or lost through vice or morally bad action, nor can it be increased through virtue or morally correct action. Personhood and dignity are not matters of degree, and so neither is respect. Once a person, always a person, and so individuals cannot forfeit dignity or the right to respect no matter what they do. Of course, wrongdoing may call for punishment and may be grounds for forfeiting certain rights, but it is not grounds for losing dignity or for regarding the wrongdoer with contempt. Respect is not something individuals have to earn or might fail to earn, but something they are owed simply because they are rational beings.

*Secondly*, because dignity is absolute and incomparable, the worth of all rational beings is equal. The morally worst persons have the same dignity as the morally best persons, although the former fail to live up to their dignity. What grounds dignity is something that all persons have in common, not something that distinguishes one individual from another. Thus each person is to be respected as an equal among



equals, without consideration of their individual achievements, social status, moral merit or demerit, or any feature other than their common rational nature. However, the equality of all rational beings does not entail that each person must be treated the same as every other persons, nor does it entail that persons cannot also be differentially evaluated and valued in other ways for their particular qualities, accomplishments, merit, or usefulness. But such valuing and treatment must always be constrained by the requirement to respect persons as ends in themselves.

### **What Respect Requires.**

This duty to respect others requires two things : first, that we adopt as a regulating policy a commitment to control our own desire to think well of ourselves (this being the main cause of disrespect), and second, that we refrain from treating others in the following ways: treating them merely as means (valuing them as less than ends in themselves), showing contempt for them (denying that they have any worth), treating them arrogantly (demanding that they value us more highly than they value themselves), defaming them by publicly exposing their faults, and ridiculing or mocking them. We also have duties of love to others, and Kant argues that in friendship respect and love, which naturally pull in opposite directions, achieve a perfect balance.

### **Kantian *Self Respect*.**

Everything that Kant says about human dignity and inviolability applies also in relation to the self. As we have seen, for Kant the existence of duties to oneself is a crucial precondition for all other duties -

‘For suppose that there were no such duties (to oneself) : then there would be no duties whatsoever, and so no external duties either. For I can recognize that I am under obligation to others only in so far as I at the same time put myself under obligation, since the law by virtue of which I regard myself as being under obligation proceeds in every case from my own practical reason ; and in being constrained by my own reason I am also the one constraining myself ....’ (Kant 1991, p 214).

Most generally, *self-respect* is a moral relation of persons to themselves that concerns their own intrinsic worth. Self-respect is essentially a valuing form of respect and involves all those things which contribute to an appreciation of oneself as having morally significant worth. Self-respect has to do with the structure and attunement of an individual's identity and of her life, and it reverberates throughout the self, affecting the constitution and content of the person's thoughts, desires, values, emotions, commitments, dispositions, and actions. As expressing or constituting one's sense of worth, it includes an engaged understanding of one's worth, as well as a desire and disposition to protect and preserve it.

Respect for oneself as a person, then, involves living in light of an understanding and appreciation of oneself as having dignity and moral status just in virtue of being a person, and of the moral constraints that arise from that dignity and status. All persons are morally obligated or entitled to have this kind of self-respect, and like respect for others it is grounded in equality, agency, and individuality.

### **Self Respect as Equality.**

The first is respect for oneself as a person among persons, as a member of the moral community with a status and dignity equal to every other person. This involves having some conception of the kinds of treatment from others that would count as one's due as a person and treatment that would be degrading or beneath one's dignity, desiring to be regarded and treated appropriately, and resenting and being disposed to protest against disregard and disrespectful treatment. Thinking of oneself as having certain moral rights that others ought not to violate is part of this kind of self-respect; servility (regarding oneself as the inferior of others) and arrogance (thinking oneself superior to others) are among its opposites.

### **Self-Respect as Agency.**

The second kind of recognition self-respect involves an appreciation of oneself as an agent, a being with the ability and responsibility to act autonomously and value appropriately. Persons who respect themselves as agents take their responsibilities seriously, especially their responsibilities to live in accord with their dignity as

persons, to govern themselves fittingly, and to make of themselves and their lives something they believe to be good. So, self-respecting persons regard certain forms of acting, thinking, desiring, and feeling as befitting them as persons and other forms as self-debasing or shameful. They take care of themselves and seek to develop and use their talents and abilities in pursuit of their plans, projects, and goals. Those who are shameless, uncontrolled, weak-willed, self-consciously sycophantic, chronically irresponsible, slothfully dependent, self-destructive, or unconcerned with the shape and direction of their lives may be said to not respect themselves as agents.

### **Self-Respect as Individuality / Autonomy.**

A third kind of recognition self-respect involves the appreciation of the importance of being autonomously self-defining. This involves having, and living by, a conception of a life that expresses the ideals and commitments, the pursuits and projects, that contribute to an individual's identity. Self-respecting people hold themselves to personal expectations and standards, the disappointment of which they would regard as unworthy of them, shameful, even contemptible. People who sell out, betray their own values, live inauthentic lives, let themselves be defined by others, or are complacently self-accepting lack this kind of recognition self-respect. Thus self-respect expresses confidence in one's merit as a person. Self-respecting persons are concerned to be the kind of person they think it is good and appropriate for them to be, and they try to live the kind of life such a person should live. Thus they have, and try to live by, certain standards of worthiness by which they are committed to judge themselves. They stake themselves, their value and their identities, on living in accord with these standards. Because they want to know where they stand morally, they are disposed to reflectively examine and evaluate their character and conduct in light of their normative vision of themselves. And it matters to them that they are able to bear their own survey. Self-respect contains the judgment that one is or is becoming the worthy kind of person one seeks to be. Those whose conduct is unworthy or whose character is shameful by their own standards do not deserve their own evaluative respect.

It is clear that Kant argues that just as we have a moral duty to respect others as persons, so we have a moral duty to respect ourselves as persons, a duty that derives from our dignity as rational beings. The duty of self-respect is the most important moral duty, for *unless there were duties to respect oneself, there could be no moral duties at all. Moreover, fulfilling our duty to respect ourselves is a necessary condition of fulfilling our duties to respect other persons.* Kant maintains that we are always aware of our dignity as persons and so of our moral obligation to respect ourselves, and he identifies this awareness as a feeling of reverential respect for ourselves. This is one of the natural capacities of feeling which we could have no duty to acquire but that make it possible for us to be motivated by the thought of duty. Reverence for self is, along with “moral feeling,” conscience, and love of others, a subjective source of morality, and it is the motivational ground of the duty of self-respect.

### **Kant's Problem.**

Points (1) to (3) touched on at the end of the previous section are all found in Kant, though the terminology differs : one must respect the inviolability / dignity of oneself; ones ethical and moral principles must be rooted in ones own autonomy ; and self-respect is the basis for respecting others, the self-regarding and other regarding spheres are interdependent. Implicitly, Kant views morality as an internal good, as something one develops, commits to, and lives, rather than something that is an ‘external’ and ‘other-regarding’ thing. Implicitly, Kant would also agree with the fourth point : liberalism is a form of moral minimalism

The difficulty with Kant is the lack of context. What it is to be a person or to have a status worthy of respect, what treatment and conduct are appropriate to a person, what forms of life and character have merit, what the Categorical Imperative actually means, how it is interpreted - all of these are given different content in different social and cultural contexts. What Kantian dignity and respect mean in practice will be socially constructed. Individuals necessarily learn to engage with themselves and with issues of self-worth in terms of the cultural conceptions in which they have been immersed. And different kinds of individuals may be given different opportunities in different socio-cultural contexts to acquire or develop the grounds of the different

kinds of self-respect. Self-respect may thus be less than strongly objective. People can be poor self-appraisers and their standards can be quite inappropriate to them or to any person, and so their self-respect, though still subjectively satisfying, can be unwarranted, as can the loss or lack of it.

Earlier in this Chapter we saw that 'rules morality' distinguishes between private ethics and public morality, and that the two are not only not co-extensive, but have no necessary connection. The former embodies a personal conception of the good which is subjective and not universalisable ; the latter provides a universal rule indicating how one must behave in order to be just in ones relations with others. The significance of this difference lies in the different sort of engagement called for on the part of the person seeking to know how to act when choices have to be made, how to judge what to do. Kant's *determinant judgement* is where the appropriate universal is already given, and the judging subject's engagement lies simply in subsuming the particular choice under its correct universal rule. In contrast, *reflective judgements* are where the particular is given, but the appropriate universal must be found. For Kant, judging what the latter requires is simply a matter of rational man exercising his capacity for autonomy. But the moral law cannot dictate choices : it can rule out some that are patently incompatible with it, though even those will be open to interpretation, but it leaves open a potentially vast set of choices from which the autonomous self must choose a good life, and the objective certainty of the law is unavailable to guide us.

Beiner (Crowley 1987, p21) suggests that Kant's reflective judgement encompasses two questions : '*What do I want*' (ends rationality), and '*How do I get what I want*' (means rationality). But underlying these is a third question : '*Who Am I*'? But because the Kantian self is unencumbered, or detachable from his social constitution, then is there enough substance to this 'thin' self to carry the moral responsibility for choice that at least liberals attribute to it ? Either the 'thin' self is not in a position to reflectively judge effectively, or he is strongly influenced by the similarly shallow judgements of his peers. Or, thirdly, both he and his peers are much more thickly constituted than Kant assumes, and so reflective judgement is socially constituted. As such, Kant's typology of inviolability is satisfyingly comprehensive, but requires a discourse and context of individuality to take on its intended substance.



## ARISTOTLE AND SELF-LOVE.

The brief focus here is the role of '*self-love*' in Aristotelian ethics and the thesis that a certain kind of self-love is foundational for moral agency – that *virtue* requires 'self-love' (Nicomachean Ethics 9, iv, viii). It is an important tenet of Aristotle's theory of friendship that each person is her own best friend, or at least that the good person is. Against common opinion, Aristotle maintains that we ought to love ourselves (at least if we are good), and that virtuous actions are performed from self-love. Aristotle acknowledges that there is an ordinary meaning of 'self-love' in which it is bad - when it refers to people's tendency to satisfy their own appetites for *external goods*, such as money, honor, and bodily pleasure, and to award the biggest share of these to themselves. He is arguing only that self-love is good when the term is meant in a different sense - I am more truly a self-lover when I love the rational or controlling part of me. If I act on this truer self-love, then I will seek to award to the rational part of my soul the best things, namely, virtuous actions.

The crucial point is that Aristotle makes 'self-love' a precondition for the love of others. By 'self-love' Aristotle means self-worth, positive regard, respect and concern which comes from doing what promotes well-being/flourishing (*eudaimonia*), and contrasts with the pursuit of egoistic self interest. In this respect, the two different and opposing senses of self-love are tied to the contrast between internal and external goods.

Aristotle's theory of friendship in Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a conception of the well-ordered self. The good man is a lover of self in that he is a person who has a certain integrity and self-sufficiency. Such a self contrasts with alien selves, defined by power, prestige, or money. For Aristotle, the former, healthy person has a soul ruled by intelligence and can form genuine friendships. The latter, however, have souls dominated by the corrupt appetites of Sardanapallus, exhibit a deficient love of self, and participate in defective forms of friendship. Aristotle then traces out a complex psychological dialectic of ability to love oneself as a necessary concomitant of love for others. Each friend, on Aristotle's account, has the capacity to achieve insight into the other's good. Further, that good is one's own good : friendship and solidarity have similar roots in self-love. For a friend can recognize

the personality of others and distinguish their needs, based on his own sense of self. His concern involves genuine recognition. Thus, a person capable of such friendship displays individuality. He is capable of a life of his own and has a certain sense of purpose or self-command. In Aristotle's portrayal, a friend need not merely hide from himself, as the evil person does, in the company of others. Since bad people despise themselves, they recall when alone only "unpleasant memories." Lacking integrity, they need blind approval or money in an unceasing attempt to reassure themselves. Others exist for them merely as means, not as independent persons to whose needs they might attend. Further, such people, driven by appetites yet haunted by reason, are always at war with themselves. Their self-hatred rules out genuine friendship. Thus, for Aristotle, the dialectic of self-love and concern for others is at its most intense in friendship; this kind of 'social individuality' is also, however, displayed in weaker forms of affiliation, such as citizenship in a *polis*.

Despite major changes, one can detect similarities to these Aristotelian insights in the modern psychoanalytic theory of the self (Heinz Kohut, Harry Guntrip, Alice Miller, etc). For example, Ferrara (1998, p80-107) identifies within the psychoanalytic tradition a broad convergence on the salience of four dimensions of the well-being of an individual identity : coherence, vitality, depth, and maturity, though each has many sub-dimensions, and he uses these to develop a conception of *authenticity as coherence*. Similarly, Chazan (1998, Ch 4) links 'self-psychology' and Aristotle as both insisting on the priority of the relation that the self has to itself over its relations with others. For both, in order to relate to others without seeking to fulfill some need of the self, the self has first to be in a certain state : for self-psychologists it must be a cohesive self; for Aristotle it must be a self that has the capacity to be independent of pleasure and advantage seeking aims

### **J.S.MILL'S MORAL SELF.**

Mill's social and political philosophy is built on the principle of the liberty of self-development, the development of human and individual potential. Freedom and individuality are important as ends in themselves because of what they say about, and how they develop, the worth of the agent – his 'comparative worth' as a human

being. Freedom is a precondition of the worth of the agent, and an essential component in Mill's ideal of individuality. Unless a person's actions are freely chosen, he cannot be regarded as a worthy person, even though otherwise useful results may have been achieved by the denial of his freedom. This is Mill's sense of the *moral value of persons* – the development of '*ethical autonomy*'. This is not to say that those who do not develop their individuality and have strong desires to conform unthinkingly to a certain way of life are not thereby inviolable, but he did not place a high value on the satisfaction of these desires because they failed to develop human potential. In arriving at this position we need to see what Mill was opposing himself to, which was Bentham's utilitarian morality.

Bentham's view that men have interests reducible to pleasures and pains that determine their actions, and that happiness lies in the satisfaction of such interests, comes to be regarded by Mill as excessively narrow in its disregard of *internal character*, and as practically and historically wrong. Bentham's great fault was that he had limited the judgement of an action simply to an evaluation of its external consequences, and in doing so had ignored *the relationship between the act performed and the character of the actor*. The moral being of a person and his internal character are in practice largely ignored. This emphasis on the direct consequences of an act may work well enough in law, but in morality and politics it denies complete understanding. Law and morality were not to be confused, what mattered was -

'the inward motives and impulses which constitute the essence of morality'  
(Mill '*The Friend*' 1837, p169, in Halliday 1976, p 59).

Allied to this narrow view of a moral or political act is Bentham's equally partial view of people's motives in performing them. The notion of the happiness or interest which they strive for is interpreted in a narrow and selfish manner, and the motive of conscience or moral obligation is generally dismissed. Bentham's system lacked generosity and tolerance, dealing only with the '*petite-morale*' and with the grubby satisfaction of interests ('*On Bentham*' 1859). In Mill's view, Bentham had considered interest only 'in the vulgar sense' of purely self-regarding satisfaction. No

consideration had been given to the existence of common purpose. These were the defining characteristics of social and political collaboration, the source of all that made considered agreement possible. The new radicalism required a philosophy of agreement, not one of conflict. With Benthamism, however, the permanence of competitive and self-regarding desires had to be accepted as a matter of indifference, except when the other-regarding consequences were demonstrably pernicious. Consequently, the old system had offered *no incentive for the improvement of individual character* and no motives other than fear or hope for responsible social conduct. The instruments of deterrence and sanction were the only means considered. Utilitarianism and social education had been made incompatible, and radicalism had been cut off from its main hope of progress, the moral and mental cultivation of the people.

### **Self-Regarding and Other-Regarding.**

A focus of Mill commentators has been on the boundaries of the self/other-regarding relation, but from two opposing directions : the libertarian supporters of a self-regarding private sphere of property rights, economic freedom, and laissez-faire ; and welfare liberal or socialist critics who argue that the notion of a self-regarding arena presupposes what does not exist - a domain of purely self-regarding actions, an atomistic and asocial 'private sphere', which affects no one else.

But a major concern of Mill was with a third option that is often ignored in this debate, namely the 'self-regarding' as *a private sphere of self-development and virtue*, where the individual respects his own inviolability, an ethical sphere which provides the foundations for the moral sphere of other-regarding action. Mill comments –

“in proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is, therefore, capable of being more valuable to others” (Mill 1991, p70)

This suggests that the self and other-regarding cannot be easily separated. 'Harm' is relevant to both the self and other-regarding spheres in the senses that (a) self-regarding behaviour may be harmful to the self, not respect the self ; (b) other-regarding actions and harm originate in the self-regarding sphere. Mill's self-



regarding private sphere is an area of 'non-interference' precisely because for Mill it is an arena of *self culture* (see Chapter 5) and the development of virtue or moral individuality, and these are, for Mill, crucial to the quality of other-regarding behaviour. In the self-regarding arena, the personal propensity to reform ones character became for Mill a conscious sentiment of moral freedom. Moral freedom is the achieved desire to modify our character –

'our being able to modify our character, if we wish, is itself the feeling of moral freedom we are conscious of'. (Mill 1974, p841)

'It is of course necessary, to render our consciousness of Freedom complete, that we should have succeeded in making our character all we have hitherto attempted to make it ; for if we have wished and not attained, we have, to that extent not power over our character – we are not free' (Mill 1974 p341).

To Mill, a moral outlook was synonymous with a sympathetic interest in the common feelings and destinies of all humans. The moral feeling was an internal as well as a disinterested feeling, existing 'quite independently of any expected consequences'. 'I conceive that feeling to be a natural outgrowth from the social nature of man.' This, when combined with man's 'capacity of fellow-feeling', was the ground of all moral conduct. (Halliday 1976, p57).

Consequently, in Mill's view, morality could never be a simple matter of teaching or imposed authority. He had learnt the romantic lesson : moral conduct required social awareness, and this could result only from *each person's own attempts at a self-culture in which imaginative sympathies were developed and made habitual*. In effect, morality rested on acts of imagination, on leaps of awareness, which brought home the realities of social living. Each person had to transcend present desires in order to recognise the pleasures and pains of others; the capacity for habitual moral conduct demanded the highest development of human character. The test or proof of individual self-culture was not supplied by *common rules*, but by the extent to which each person voluntarily recognised obligations owed to other persons; this demonstrated his capacity for sympathetic imagination and made a reality of fellow-feeling. The ultimate end was –

'the good of the species could in no other way be forwarded but by ....each taking for his exclusive aim the development of what is best in *himself*'. (Halliday 1976, p57).



This ethic of self-development gave rise to one simple injunction. If the good of all did require each person to develop himself, then everyone was obliged to form his character as he would ideally wish it to be. The mark of moral conduct was active self-development. The new utilitarianism simply extended the logic of self-culture to the reaches of moral philosophy

The Benthamite understanding of moral judgement was now completely inadequate. Benthamism had been proud of its refusal to judge individual character, preferences and tastes - this was an unnecessary interference smacking of paternalism. Unless behaviour had specific other-regarding effects or consequences, which could be observed and demonstrated, then it was of no concern to the moralist. A person's character as such was a matter of indifference - only his public or social conduct mattered. The moralist had no right at all to pronounce on conduct which was neither good nor bad in its consequences for other people. Where the agent only was involved the matter was not a moral one, and the agent was not liable to praise and blame, to reward and punishment. But for Mill this made self-culture unlikely and an adequate moral philosophy impossible. Knowledge of a person was bound to include an estimation of his tastes and preferences: this was how character was assessed. And Mill explicitly criticised Bentham for refusing to praise or to condemn in self-regarding areas -

'as if men's likings and dislikings, on things in themselves indifferent, were not full of the most important inferences as to every point of their character; as if a person's tastes did not show him to be wise or a fool, cultivated or ignorant, gentle or rough, sensitive or callous, generous or sordid, benevolent or selfish, conscientious or depraved'. (Mill, 'On Bentham' 1859).

Mill's argument was that *actions and character were indissolubly linked*. The moral philosopher had to consider both together. In refusing to consider character, *and in not including in the consequences of an act the consequences to the agent himself*, Bentham had needlessly and wrongly limited the principle of utility to public conduct. He had -

'largely exemplified, and contributed very widely to diffuse, a tone of thinking, according to which any kind of action or any habit, which in its own specific consequences cannot be proved to be necessarily or probably productive of unhappiness to the agent himself or to others, is supposed to be fully justified'. (Mill, 'Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy', quoted in Halliday 1976, p 58).

The conclusion was obvious: moral judgement had to be judgement of person as well as of conduct, of character as well as of consequences.

In his essay 'On Genius', Mill argued the romantic case directly. A man should be judged, 'not by what he does, but by what he is' (Halliday 1976, p 59). What mattered was the spirit in which a man performed his works rather than the works themselves. In Mill's view, the moral philosopher had to consider the person and his inner character for one very good reason -

'it often happens that an essential part of the morality or immorality of an action or a rule of action consists in its influence upon the agent's own mind : upon his susceptibilities of pleasure or pain, upon the general direction of his thoughts, feelings and imagination'. (Mill on Sedgewick, p56, in Halliday 1976 p 59)

In other words, without each individual's own attempt to cultivate himself and to develop an imaginative sympathy, desires would remain purely self-regarding. No attempt would be made to modify feelings with reference to the feelings of others. There would be no effective or permanent recognition of common purpose or purposes. Fellow-feeling would remain undeveloped. Morality would be limited to a few prudential forbearances. The '*petite morale*' alone would be considered 'and on the *quid pro quo* principles which regulate trade' ('*On Bentham*' 1859). It was for just this reason that all systems of ethics, all worthy moral philosophies, should endeavour to aid individuals in the formation of their own character - they had to be inspirational, and they would fail to be so if individual tastes and preferences were treated as matters of complete indifference.

Extending the scope of moral concern to include the character of the agent as well as the consequences of an action to persons other than the agent, led Mill to divide morality into two equal and interdependent parts. The essay on 'Bentham' gave a statement of this two-part theory. Here Mill insisted that the first part of morality was *self-education* -

'the training, by the human being himself, of his affections and will. That department is a blank in Bentham's system. The other and co-equal part, the regulation of his outward actions, *must be altogether halting and imperfect without the first*'. (Halliday 1976, p 59).

Mill had clearly abandoned the idea that where the agent only was concerned the matter was not a moral one. His commitment to self culture suggested there was a duty to improve oneself, the agent's concern for his own personal worth being an essential preparation for responsible social conduct. Without that preparation morality would be limited to a halting series of minimal forbearances, a kind of prudential business ethic.

However, Mill was also concerned to avoid any pedantic or dogmatic narrowness. So he began to elaborate a prescriptive philosophy of action, an '*Art of Life*' as he called it in the *Logic*, in which there was a three-fold division of conduct into morality, prudence and aesthetics. Usually he placed self-education, the inner character, in the realms of prudence and aesthetics : self-culture was not properly a part of morality. There was no *moral duty* to improve oneself and there could be no question of punishment for a lack of personal worth. The only point to be insisted on was that this was still no reason to be indifferent to character. All increases in human happiness due merely to a change of circumstances, unaccompanied 'by changes in the state of the desires', were hopeless, and without the latter there could never be an adequate motive for modifying external circumstances 'to good ends'. ('*Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy*', p15, quoted in Halliday 1976, p 54). In '*On Liberty*' Mill separates persuasion from sanction in terms of a broad distinction between *virtue and duty*. Virtue was a matter of opinion ; duty a matter of obligation and punishment. To designate an action self-regarding was to make moral judgements inapplicable. For Mill, then, the notion of *duties* to oneself was without meaning; the only sensible interpretation of the phrase was –

“self-respect or self-development, and for none of these is any one accountable to his fellows, because for none of them is it for the good of humans that he be held accountable to them” (Mill 1991, p 135)

In *On Liberty* Mill was concerned to demonstrate that liberty was consistent not only with the 'imposition of social obligations by law', but also with the 'imposition' of persuasion by opinion and example. *Rules of opinion* were concerned solely with the quality of self-regarding behaviour. They operated by advice, instruction and persuasion, and required an active and disinterested *concern for the character and conduct of other people*, even when that character and conduct had occasioned no

perceptible harm to any person or persons other than the agent. It does seem important to read this in the context of Mill's general assault against the '*tyranny of custom*' in '*On Liberty*', that – as in his '*Art of Life*' above – he is concerned to avoid any '*petite morale*', any pedantic or dogmatic narrowness. His argument merely repeats the conclusions of his new or revised utilitarianism : moral judgement was judgement of person as well as of conduct, judgement of character as well as of consequences. These rules should be the consequence of active and critical free inquiry and *their end or function was to encourage self-culture and to promote self-regarding virtues.*

However, there is a difficult point. Mill says (1991, p 134-5) that if a person can responsibly regulate his other-regarding conduct without being good or excellent in his own character, then he is entitled to conduct his own affairs free from the pressures of opinion. Only if defects of character result in defects of social conduct can a person rightfully suffer severe *penalties* at the hands of others. If, on the other hand, a person is manifestly able to fulfil his obligations and to perform his duty, then a lack of merit or virtue is acceptable. Mill seems entirely right on this in its own terms, but it does appear to contradict his earlier claims about both the interdependence of the self and other-regarding, and about changing 'self-culture' being a precondition for changing circumstances. What Mill describes here would be a case of 'other-regarding' concern being an *external good*, conformed to for fear of penalties. It also suggests that, in such circumstances, the standard of 'other-regarding' concern must therefore be one that has been created, or imposed, by the State or society. The risk then is that such a standard would be simply one that reflects the tyranny of prevailing custom – something that is at odds with Mill's preoccupation with 'self-culture' and individuality.

### **Harm.**

What is crucial to Mill's defence of liberty is his belief that certain reasons for limiting it - paternalistic, moralistic, and gut reactions - are irrelevant, whereas the prevention of harm to others is always relevant. Mill's principle of liberty says that liberty can be restricted only to prevent harm to others, and (following J.C.Rees) this can be interpreted as meaning harm to the '*interests*' of others. Mill's 'self-



regarding' actions do not *harm the interests* of others, though they will often affect or concern others.

But what are those interests that are so vital that they are not to be harmed ? Mill's answer here is utilitarian: the ideal rules are those which best conform to the utilitarian standard. But it is evident from the previous discussion that Mill's own 'utilitarian standard' is the liberty of self-development and individuality, and this provides him with an objective standard of 'harm'. Mill's most fundamental commitment is to self-development : this is an individual *responsibility* and a vital *interest*, and all are harmed if they are denied the opportunity to develop themselves. Vital interests and individual responsibilities are the grounds of rights. Therefore people have a right to liberty of self-development and thus are harmed and their rights infringed if their social circumstances bar them from developing themselves. For example, Mill's necessary and sufficient conditions for complete freedom, discussed in Chapter 3 are –

- (a) the power to self-develop : 'self-culture',
- (b) the opportunity for its exercise : the absence of impediments upon the exercise of this capacity when one does wish to exercise it.
- (c) and the desire to do so : absence of conditions inhibiting the occurrence of the desire so to do.

'Harm' is of relevance to each of these. We have discussed them previously in relation to Mill's 'authenticity'. For example, one of an individuals most important interests is in forming a 'life-plan', a conception of what is meaningful and valuable in life. Constraints, and therefore harm, can operate either on an agents opportunity to act upon his own choice among possible alternatives or, at a prior level, as internalized constraints on the agents very opportunity or capacity to conceive of and explore possible options. It is in the context of this developmental perspective that Mill's conception of harm should be understood when he speaks of –

“the moral rules which forbid mankind to hurt one another (in which we must never forget to include wrongful interference with each other's freedom) are . . . vital to human well-being.” (Donner 1991, p161)



“the moralities which protect every individual from being harmed by others, either directly or by being hindered in his freedom of pursuing his own good” (Donner 1991, p161).

In Mill’s theory the good (and the pursuit of it) is tied to the development and exercise of one’s higher human powers, and from these passages it seems that Mill is naming liberty, specifically liberty of self-development, as a vital human interest that must not be harmed - people are harmed if they are denied the opportunity to develop themselves to the extent social resources permit. To deny someone the educative experience or opportunity of development is to deny that person the status of moral agency or of complete moral agency. As Berger argues –

“the doctrine of the importance to human well-being of individual self-development or, as I prefer to call it, autonomy..... is aimed at providing a rule of conduct for society that is designed to protect what Mill regards as a vital interest of persons - autonomous development and activity ..... people have a right to individuality. (Donner op cit, p190).

## **CONCLUSION.**

What has been sweepingly described above as ‘contemporary moral philosophy’, i.e. liberal moral philosophy, is an ‘other-regarding’ morality, concerned with the relationship between the self and the other, but not with the relationship of the self to himself. There is a separation of the ‘self-regarding’ and the ‘other-regarding’, and a contradiction between the approved pursuit of self-interest in the former, and its supposed renunciation in the latter. The problem of modern morality is that it is an *external good* rather than an *internal good* – it is instrumental and/or imposed, external to the individual’s *culturally endorsed* pursuit of his own self-interest, his own conception of the good, and thereby always fragile, requiring to be State-led and reinforced. The self-regarding and the other-regarding are at odds, and the ‘sphere’ of the ‘self-regarding’ is neglected.

Moral theory as such does not *need* to make this conceptual distinction between morality and self-interest in order to be coherent. Rather, it needs a clearer or different sense of the individual’s self-interest. In a world where self-interest consists of the pursuit of external goods then morality and self-interest are inevitably at odds.

But liberal morality offers no solutions to this problem because it has focussed on its consequences rather than its sources. Its sources are *naturalised*, the inviolable human pursuit of individual self-interest via external goods. As such, a dichotomy is created between self-interest and morality, and the latter is then confined and reduced to a narrow range of human behaviour relating to aspects of our relations with others, and the avoidance of whatever is currently culturally designated as causing harm to them.

In contrast to the above, rather than seeing a contradiction between morality and self-interest the notion of the moral self *begins* with the individual's self-interest. A moral self is one who desires to have the best life possible, a life rich in *internal goods* and with a *just* share of external goods. This is the self's *own interest*, and there is a connection between what is good for the agent in this sense and what is morally good, a connection between morality and the goodness of a human life. The starting point for such a conception of the moral self must be the recognition that the range of the ethical should include any concerns that might arise in response to the question of how one should live. Following from this is the acknowledgement that the 'self-regarding' (the 'ethical') and the 'other-regarding' (the 'moral') are interdependent and symbiotic. From this starting point, the first underlying principle of the moral self is the notion of individual *inviolability*, of 'human dignity'. Integral to the latter is what MacPherson (1973, p42) calls '*developmental power*', '*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*'. As discussed in Chapter 2, to be human is to innately possess *potential worth*, and to have an *interest* in, and bear the moral *responsibility* for, creating, developing, or realizing this worth, via 'self-determination' and 'self-realization'. The 'rights' of individuals follow from this responsibility, and such rights must be respected because this respect is a necessary condition for maximising the realization of potential human value. The unfolding process is then as follows (arrows omitted) -

self-determination

inviolability ----- ethical autonomy ----- internal goods ----- moral  
autonomy

self-realization

Ethical autonomy is at the heart of this process and central to it is what Plato called '*care of the soul*', but has been variously referred to as self-worth, self-valuing, positive self-regard or, for Aristotle, 'self-love'. The ethically autonomous ***person is involved in a continuous self-creative activity***, implicitly an acknowledgement of an ethical and ontological commitment to *make* her own self, rather than be a self that is merely an extension or projection of others. Such a self is a self-determined and realized self, confident in their self and in their values and commitments, and in their relations with others. Such a self is a moral self, and to repeat Mill -

"In proportion to the development of his individuality each person becomes more valuable to himself and is, therefore, capable of being more valuable to others". (Mill 1991 p70).

## **CHAPTER 8 COMMUNALISM.**

Conceptions of comprehensive inviolability, self-determination and self-realization, internal goods, and the moral self, all imply, and require, some complementary substantive conception of community. This Chapter outlines such a conception, an open-ended but 'moralised' conception of community that is sufficiently strong and flexible structurally that it fosters individuality, diversity, and difference, a community that rejects the *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille* of individualism, but revives the *Wesenwille* of *Gemeinschaft*.

### **WHY COMMUNITY ?**

People need other people, for *natural*, *social*, and *individual* reasons. There are undoubtedly times when this is regrettable, because other people can be hell, as Sartre put it. But there are a lot of people about, and they seem not to go away. Humans are social beings, and they need others for every aspect of their lives. They are conceived through other people, and they are dependent on others for their survival. People need food, shelter, protection, affection, knowledge. Everything that they need but cannot make or obtain for themselves must come from or with others. What they need to know and do not yet know must be learnt from others. They need the stimulus of difference and diversity that comes with a wider range of people. People are interdependent and cooperate, they cannot do without each other, they are connected by a wide range of mutual dependencies. Community begins with, and is largely supported by, this experience of interdependence and reciprocity, and it is this that underlies the voluntary and rational components of community. It seems reasonable to assume or conclude then that people will live in groups, and identify with them, because doing so is necessary. But also because it is in their *interests* to do so, for a mix of natural, social, and individual reasons ; because living in groups benefits them in some ways, gives them access to resources and opportunities, access to a more secure and comfortable environment, enhances their freedom and well-being, etc. So people live together in a variety of social arrangements : small or

extended family units, villages, neighbourhoods, towns, and cities. These are 'communities', and collectively they make up a society.

But we need to hold on to the idea that the value of living in community must in some way be tied to people's *interests*. Linked to this is a second point, the distinction between community and other social relations. *Social relations, or sociality*, are a necessary condition of the existence and development of individuals, and in this sense humans are *social beings*, social relations are constitutive of our identity. But this does not mean that community in general, or any specific community, is essential for our existence, or that community, rather than other forms of social relations, are the target or source of our belonging, identification, recognition, self-respect, or expression of selfhood, etc.

This raises the wider issue of the *value of community*. There seem to be three positions in relation to this : individualist, collectivist, and hybrid accounts.

- (1) *Individualist* accounts of the value of community will be reducible to the value that it contributes to the lives of individuals. This is the *moral individualism* discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. It is normally associated with *ontological individualism*.
- (2) *Collectivist* accounts of the value of community would claim that its value is over and above the value that it has for its members : a community might consist of relations between individuals, but value can emerge from this that cannot be reduced to the way they enhance the lives of individuals (Mason 2000, Chapter 2). The collectivist rejects what they regard as being the individualist's ontological individualism, the notion that society is composed only of individuals, and that its character is determined by the characteristics of those constituent individuals. The collectivist would say that the individual is not separate from society but takes his character from his historical and social context – humans are social beings and their behaviour is largely the product of their social environment. Consequently, social structures and cultures have a reality and existence of their own that goes well beyond anything that derives from the nature of individuals. But from this starting point entirely different conclusions are drawn by different theorists or positions.



- (A) because individuals are socially constituted and gain their character from the community they inhabit it has great moral worth : it is the community that develops an individual's capacities, gives a sense of roots, belonging, and identity, and provides the focus of individual motivation and activity.
- (B) the reality and value of community in its own right – its culture, institutions, customs, traditions, language, and specific achievements, which are viewed as being of great cultural or moral worth.

Communitarians and conservatives, with different emphases, would probably subscribe to both.

- (3) *Hybrid* accounts would say that community has value only if it is *just* and enables individual development, freedom, and autonomy. Community and social relations may well be *ontologically* prior to individuals, but they are not *morally* prior. Ontological individualism is rejected, and must be separated from moral individualism, precisely because it fails to recognize the ways in which social structures and culture can constrain individual development and freedom.

Marx and anarchism would both adopt this view, as would *individuality*. As McTaggart commented, any view that attributes ultimate value to State or Society-

“is fetish worship.....it would be as reasonable to worship a sewage pipe, which also possesses considerable value as a means”. (quoted in Lukes 1973, p50).

## **WHAT IS COMMUNITY ?**

In everyday terms a community is simply a collection of people (a social group) in a common habitat/location, and in itself this shared geography gives them certain things in common, a set of local relationships – as a minimum, close proximity, interaction, familiarity, some shared experience, a sense of belonging, possibly roots, and a shared local history (Lee and Newby 1983, p57). More usually, community denotes more than this : people within a bounded geographical area who interact within shared institutions, and who possess some common sense of interdependence and belonging. But shared territory in itself is not enough to constitute community,

particularly if the people in it do not perceive themselves as such. What seems generally to be thought to bind a community is not its *structure* but its *state of mind*, a *feeling* of community (Outhwaite and Bottomore 1994, p 98).

For this reason, 'community' is used to describe a type of relationship in which there is a strong sense of *shared identity* and experiences between individuals – the idea of a '*spirit of community*', a sense of commonality among a group of people, even though they may be geographically scattered. Lee and Newby describe this sense of community as '*communion*', a meaningful identity with other people and the shared experiences accompanying this identification. Cohen similarly sidesteps a structural model of community by concentrating on *meaning* : community as a symbolic entity with no fixed parameters, because *it exists only in relation and opposition to other perceived communities* ; a system of values and moral codes which provides its members with a sense of identity (Cohen 1985). Similarly, the idea of community as an '*imagined*' entity and symbolic 'idea force' was also used by Anderson (1983, p 13-15) in relation to nationalism. What all of this begins to suggest is that the nature and '*unity*' of 'comm-unity' is not necessarily a *structural* characteristic of it but, rather, somehow 'all in the head', a subjective and psychological matter. We return to this problem below.

Community contrasts with society or '*association*', where people interact primarily on an instrumental, contractual, and impersonal basis, usually for some self-regarding reasons. This community/society contrast might be viewed in Buber's terms discussed in the previous Chapter as one between 'I'-'Thou' (interpersonal) relations, and 'I'-'It' (social) relations. To identify community as interpersonal association is to say that within it people interact with one another as 'whole persons' – non-instrumentally and non-manipulative, etc. Whereas in society, interaction is transaction specific and instrumental - the shop assistant and customer are no more than role occupants. We return below to this community / society difference in Tonnies distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Before that, I want to explore further the features of community.

For Selznick (1992, p360) the 'key values at stake in the construction and nurture of a community' are a complex set of interacting variables : historicity, identity,

mutuality, plurality, autonomy, participation, and integration. Michael Taylor (1982, p26) suggests three core features of community : beliefs and values in common ; relations should be direct and many-sided; reciprocity : mutual aid, cooperation, sharing. The core features of community identified by Mason (2000, Chapter 1) depend upon what type of community we are referring to. He distinguishes two notions of community : the 'ordinary concept', which he sees as being uncontested; and a 'moralized concept', which *is* contested. The ordinary concept of community (which Mason says is typical of recent Anglo-American political philosophy) is constituted by a group of people who –

1. share a range of values – some common interest and goal.
2. share a way of life – activities that require working together.
3. identify with the group and its practices – commitment to it.
4. recognize each other as members of that group.

A group may exhibit some, or all, of these *aspects* of community ; and each aspect may vary in *degree*. Mason agrees that the points are vague, but suggests vagueness is inherent to the concept of community. One obvious difficulty is that all four of these could be largely subjective and psychological, a state of mind, a *feeling* of community, rather than being structural. Another difficulty is how one should distinguish these four points from the normal everyday interaction, interdependence, reciprocity, and cooperation in pursuit of loosely shared goals that is characteristic of people who co-exist in the same territory and have been socialized to the same culture or sub-culture ? Yet amongst whom, nevertheless, there can be fundamentally different interests which fuel ongoing conflicts and a lack of unity. Furthermore the key words Mason uses in his points – 'share', 'identify', 'recognize' – are open to widely varying interpretation, as are all the other notions usually referred to in discussions of community – 'interdependence', 'reciprocity', 'cooperation', 'identity', 'commitment', 'common', etc. As Mason says, each of the four aspects can vary in *degree*, but it is such variations in degree that will be crucial to characterising the specific structure and ethos of any community.

Mason's '*moralized concept*' of community entails that two further conditions must be met –

5. solidarity between its members : mutual concern ; minimally - members must give each other's interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning.
6. there must be no systematic exploitation or injustice.

This is much more substantive and structural, though again these will vary in *degree*, and could also be '*all in the head*'. But essentially, this difference between the 'ordinary' and the 'moralised' conceptions of community points to a difference between community as an '*external good*' and community as an '*internal good*'. Point (5) would be crucial in creating a particular *ethos*, which would then be structurally supported by the absence of exploitation and injustice. Perhaps Mason's designation of 'moral' is not entirely appropriate here. Whilst both (5) and (6) *are* moral, they also seem to point to *structural* features of community, and ones that give some substance to the 'vagueness' of points (1) to (4). The presence or absence of mutual concern and justice would seem to be important to the specific character of points (1) to (4); that this presence or absence would importantly contribute to what sort of 'unity' or identity was being implied by them. Nevertheless, Mason's introduction of this moral dimension enables us to conclude that there are three bases of community : *psychological, structural, and moral*.

Mason's point is that (5) and (6) may be absent, but a group could still be a community in the 'ordinary' sense, but not in the 'moralized' sense -

“there is no reason to think that there is a general tendency for members of a community in the ordinary sense to be mutually concerned : whether solidarity arises will depend on the nature of the community and its practices, and how members of the community conceive of the group and its relationship to its individual members” (Mason 2000, p 31)

This may be so in some cases, but it seems more likely that the *appearance* of (5) and (6), if not the *substance*, are also both necessary for community. Mason himself seems to edge towards this view.



A patriarchal society, or slave plantation, may be subjectively experienced as a community. Mason seems to attribute this to 'false consciousness' (p30), which seems to imply an objective standard of community (points 5 and 6), but he does not pursue this. But what Mason's 'ordinary concept' seems to show is that characteristics traditionally associated with community such as 'interdependence', 'sharing', 'identification', 'recognition', etc, may well co-exist in community alongside exploitation, injustice, and a lack of mutual concern. Why this might occur is clearly implied by Mason because he adds that (5) may be present in the absence of (6) –

“a person may have beliefs about others that makes him think he is not exploiting them and which can allow his concern for them to be genuine even whilst he is exploiting them”. (Mason 2000, p27).

And presumably the 'exploited' might rationalise things in a similar fashion. But (5) in the absence of (6) will have risks. As Baker (1987, p35) comments –

“there can be no genuine sense of community between degrader and degraded or exploiter and exploited – these relationships mock the very idea of community”.

Or as MacMurray (1961, p158) puts it –

“equality and freedom are constitutive of community; and the democratic slogan, 'Liberty, equality, fraternity' is an adequate definition of community – of the self-realization of persons in relation”.

But as Mason seems to clearly imply, *both* exploiter and exploited may be deluded : there may well be a subjective *sense* of community in the absence of (5) or (6), simply because these are not perceived as being injustice or lack of concern. As the above discussion sought to suggest, community can perfectly well exist in such circumstances precisely because it is predominantly subjective - a *state of mind*, a *feeling*. Mason points to the obvious conclusion to be drawn –

“The ambiguity in the idea of community might also make us wonder whether it is common practice to trade on it by correctly describing a group as a community in the ordinary sense, but implicitly claiming for it the moral qualities of community in the moralized sense when they are in reality lacking .....it may serve the ideological purpose of diverting attention from



the relationships of exploitation that exist within a way of life” (Mason 2000, p37-8).

In this sense, it can reasonably be concluded that Mason’s points (1) to (6) are crucial to *all* conceptions of community : but that (5) and (6) can exist in either appearance only, or in substance; when they exist in substance they will vary in *degree*.

And this is where the problems, or limitations, of community begin – the problem of equating a *sense* of community with community itself. Community implies some strong sense of *identity* between its members, but it is the diverse conceptions of what constitutes such shared identity that makes of it such a fundamentally ambiguous and contested concept. The ambiguity and confusion perhaps arise from an emphasis on, or desire for, Mason’s points 1 to 4, but in the absence of any adequate socio-economic or moral basis for them, such as points 5 and 6. If community entails some genuine *unity* between its members then ultimately this can only be founded upon something resembling points 5 and 6, that these are more fundamental to the constitution of community than points 1 to 4 - the latter would then be an outcome of the former. The absence of (5) or (6) creates a contradiction and illusion at the heart of (1) to (4), the appearance of ‘community’ without any deep substance to it. Interdependence and cooperation to get things done will exist, a way of life and values can be shared, but underlying differences of interests and sources of tension and conflict will exist. Attempts would be made to camouflage this, or to ‘naturalise’ it, claim its ‘inevitability’, etc, and there would be a stress on allegiance and loyalty to the community, all based on shared *identity*. Shared identity, what makes them similar, becomes the basis for community - the unity of comm-unity is built on similarity of identity. At the same time exaggerated affirmations of identity can lead to insularity, parochialism, and antagonism to internal dissent and external influences.

One consequence of the absence of Mason’s points (5) and (6) is the development of forms of State intervention or ‘collectivism’ to remedy some of the effects of this absence, as in the liberal conception of the ‘Right’. A limitation of such intervention is that if it does not structurally and culturally alter the community substantively in the direction of (5) and (6) then commitment to its actions is external, committed to for fear of sanctions rather than as an external good.

What all of this illustrates is some of the potential disadvantages, or *disvalue*, of community –

- Mill's 'tyranny of society', that people 'escape' into the conformity and safety of community and custom, disappear into the crowd – Fromm's 'fear of freedom'.
- that 'community' risks suppressing or denying individual difference.
- that when a person identifies with a community she compromises her ability to be objective about it, to stand back from that community and assess its practices and ways of life.
- that the above, combined with the existence of different communities, sets the stage for intolerance, or for inter-communal conflicts.

In this sense then, the presence of Mason's points (5) and (6) are not optional but essential to ensure not only *substantive* community, but also to ensure the toleration of *difference and diversity within* the community. A community built on points (1) to (4) alone has a structural and moral contradiction within it ; it therefore falls back on common identity; and is more likely to feel threatened by difference and diversity. In contrast, a community built on something resembling points (1) to (6) is a structurally strong community that can tolerate difference, diversity, and individuality. This requires a particular form of community – communalism.

## **COMMUNALISM.**

Because the concept of 'community' is ambiguous, and open to abuse, I want to distinguish it from '*communalism*'. Previously it was suggested that there seem to be three bases of community : *structural, moral, and psychological*. In 'community', the *psychological* has been emphasised : the '*spirit*', or '*feeling*', or shared sense of *meaning*, the subjective experience of common *identity*, all functioning as a psychological basis for the *unity* of comm-unity – that 'community' is 'all in the head', etc. This might be seen as a necessary counterbalance to the absence of a structural and moral basis for community : where these are lacking, *unity* is emphasised ; if it does not exist in reality, then just *imagine* it.

'Community' would be used to describe those characteristics summarised in Mason's points (1) to (4). The latter might encroach on, or include, point (5), but this would lack substance in the absence of point (6). In the case of each point there is the

question of '*degree*', and the relation between the points. Point (6) is the most substantive of Mason's points, and its relation to each of the other points shapes the degree to which they are real or merely apparent.

Communalism would be based on a substantive version of Mason's six points, or something resembling them. It would start with a structural foundation : the absence of systematic exploitation or injustice – Mason's point (6) ; and a moral one, which includes the latter, plus mutual concern - members must give each other's interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning (point 5). It seems improbable that (5) will exist in the absence of (6). *Unity* as such is not the aim of communalism (though it might be an unintended consequence) unless it enables difference and diversity. So the order of Mason's points is reversed -

- (1) there must be no systematic exploitation or injustice.
- (2) solidarity between its members : mutual concern ; minimally - members must give each other's interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning.
- (3) share a range of values – some common interest and goal.
- (4) share a way of life – activities that require working together.
- (5) identify with the group and its practices – commitment to it.
- (6) recognize each other as members of that group.

Reversing the points and making Mason's '*moralised concept*' the structural and moral basis of communalism means that these then shape all the other features, so that what they mean takes on a specific character that they lacked in Mason's model. Thus, the new point (2) takes us back to comprehensive inviolability, authenticity, and the moral self, to Shakespeare's claim : '*be true to self, because being so is regarded as being valuable in its own right, and enables us to be true to others*'. This is the interdependence of the self- and other-regarding, Buber's '*I*'-'*Thou*' relations, Rousseau's '*amour de soi*', and Rogers' '*positive regard*'. These cannot exist alongside exploitation and injustice. Point (1) itself suggests a world of internal rather than external goods. Together, they provide the foundation for commitment to community as an internal good rather than an external good.

The specific demands regarding the wider society relate to the existence of enabling conditions. Control of one's own life entails freedom from unwarranted external

constraints, impediments, and undue interference of others (negative liberty), and that one can have a significant impact upon the direction of one's own life, and the circumstances under which one must live, to the extent that this is compatible with a like opportunity for all (positive liberty). Negative liberty requires a maximum system of equal liberties. Positive liberty must include (a) the right to equal participation in all social decision-making processes that affect one's life, and (b) the right of equal access to 'the means of self-determination', which includes : income, wealth, education, leisure, social bases of self-respect, powers and opportunities, social offices and positions.

### **Communalism and Individuality.**

'Communalism' needs to be a structure and ethos that enables the features of individuality discussed in previous Chapters : inviolability, self-determination, and self-realization. The condition to aim at is a life *rich* in internal goods and with a *just* share of external goods. This requires an ethical and moral self. Shared beliefs and values of sufficient generality are compatible with diverse lifestyles : a high value placed on 'human flourishing' does not mean that courses of life through which flourishing is achieved are the same for every individual. Thus, Mill's experiments in living.

To *identify* with a group and its practices is to commit oneself to it in a way that normally involves endorsing its practices and seeking to promote its interests, whilst regarding ones well-being as intimately linked to its flourishing. In order for a person to be able to commit himself to a group and its practices he must be able to perceive them as valuable, whether instrumentally or non instrumentally, and see his concerns related in them. A persons identifications will ideally be voluntary and based on choice. If community is *automatically* constitutive of our agency by virtue of our 'identity' then the commitment to it is shallow and unreflective. The basis of *commitment* is experience and self reflectivity – the person can commit to others, to the roles and rules of the group, to community or, alternatively, censure, critique, or depart from the group. A community preoccupied with group 'identity' is a community that is a threat to individuality and, in the long term, a threat to itself.

Thus, a distinction is also made between *ascribed* or *achieved* communities. This is the difference between the 'received' community and tradition that each person inherits at birth, and the community and tradition that each person later joins by choosing his course of life – a distinction between '*received*' and '*chosen*' community (Norton 1991, p 132). For individuality, consequent upon self-determination and self-knowledge as essential to individual development, there is in the case of each person the possibility of the right community and tradition : the individual may endeavour to find this as part of the process of self-discovery, self-definition, and self-realization.

The fundamental issue invariably raised in relation to this position is the probability of tension or contradiction between the principles of individuality and community which was touched on in Chapter 5 in relation to self-realization. Self-determination and self-realization, combined with a context of 'scarcity', means that the pursuit of different self-interests will inevitably lead to conflicts between individuals and between individuals and the State or Society. Nothing that I have said above regarding individuals, social relations, or communalism, denies this. Communalism is not about a harmonious unity or uniformity of interests, but about individuality, diversity, and difference. But the issue and critique remains relevant nevertheless. It is usually directed at socialist or anarchist theorists, such as Marx, who allegedly posit a future 'synthesis of individuality and community'. Part of the problem is that the point itself is invariably conceived by its critics from a liberal standpoint, individuality being equated with individual '*self-interestedness*' and community with '*harmony or oneness of interests*', so that their juxtaposition is then regarded as being romantic utopianism (Archard 1987, p 27 and *passim*). Archard regards this view as misconceived. Marx did not believe that individual interests would be simply replaced by a general species interest that then became everyone's comprehensive social interest. Nor did he believe that differences between individual interests would disappear, or that each individual would always altruistically subordinate his own interests to those of others. What he did believe is that differences could be resolved in a non-antagonistic and non-coercive way, because of what Archard terms the *sociality* of communist society – that individuals are able to relate directly to one another as humans in ways that are not generally possible in capitalist and market



societies. *Structurally enabled* to behave in these ways because of, for example, the mutual concern and non-exploitation ethos discussed above in the form of Mason's points (5) and (6). As Archard puts it –

“where each individual has a sense of himself as social and sees his society as his ‘communal relations’ to others under their ‘communal control’, there is a willingness to settle, or try to settle, differences between individuals in ways that are fundamentally moral, that is fair and just” (Archard 1987, p31).

Thus, the ‘synthesis of individuality and community’ occurs through ‘sociality’, and not through some imagined ‘harmony or oneness of interests’. Archard (ibid) relates this sociality to individual self-realization : that self-realization is not just the creative activity of individuals, but also their sociality – “the realization of the communal nature of human beings” (Archard, p34). In this sense, individuality is *social individuality*.

One integral feature of all social relations and all forms of community is *reciprocity*, which involves relations of mutual exchange. This is grounded in the need that individuals have for the cooperation and support of others in which they realize their individual or common purposes, a basic foundation for community. Reciprocity contrasts with non-reciprocal social relations, relations of domination that inhibit freedom and impede individual autonomy or self-development.

Reciprocity may take several forms – ‘altruistic’, ‘balanced’, or ‘negative’ (M.Taylor 1982, p29) – but the contrast pursued here is that between ‘instrumental’ and ‘social’ reciprocity (Gould (1988 p 76).

*Instrumental reciprocity* : the exchange is undertaken by each agent solely for the satisfaction of their own individual needs - the other is a means to an end. Each can pursue their own self-interest up to the limit of ‘harming’ others. The interests of the other are recognized only in so far as they serve ones own interest, the other is recognized as a means to serving ones own purposes or ends, the agents are useful to each other in some way. Thus, Marx thought of social relations within capitalism as being characterised by mutual indifference and selfishness : individuals are uninterested in and indifferent to others; the particular interests, activities, and ends of each are private, pursued without reference to those of others. At the same time they egoistically pursue their own selfish interests, are concerned with others only as

a means to their own private gain, and are always prepared to subordinate the interests and ends of others to their own – each looks to his own advantage. What brings them in to relationship is the selfishness, the gain, and the private interest of each. (Archard 1987, p30).

*Social reciprocity* : a reciprocity of mutual respect; a recognition of the agents as free and equal ; a respect and concern by each agent for the aims and interests of the other as having independent value. Individuality becomes *social individuality*. As Archard (ibid) puts it, individuals are interested in the interests of others, and will no longer pursue their own projects privately, without reference to others. This does not entail altruism, subordinating ones interests to those of others, but the disappearance of mutual indifference. In instrumental reciprocity it is not counted part of my self-realization that you self-realize, whereas in social reciprocity it is. Gould (1988 p 77) describes full social reciprocity as *mutuality* : a relation in which (a) each agent recognizes the other as free and capable of self-development, (b) each acts in ways that enhance the others self-development by considerations of the others' needs, and (c) both agents take such mutual enhancement of each others agency as a conscious aim.

Michael Taylor (1982, p31) makes the connection between such forms of social reciprocity and '*fraternity*' or '*solidarity*', and links these to the Aristotelian friendship and self-love discussed in the previous Chapter. He suggests that what these require is an approximate equality and strong and secure selves, and he quotes Abrams and McCulloch's research on communes –

“To be capable of friendship one must first know and esteem oneself. Then one must engage on terms of equality in an active relationship through the enacting of which one experiences the goodness of others while demonstrating goodness to them”. (Taylor, p31; Abrams and McCulloch 1976, Chap 2).

The background to this contrast between sociality/social individuality on the one hand and individualism on the other, between instrumental and social reciprocity, can be found in Tonnies distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, with their corresponding underlying mind-sets of *Wesenwille* and *Kurwille*.

## **GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT.**

In terms of historical development, Tonnies holds that society has moved away from an age where *Gemeinschaft* (community) was predominant towards an age where *Gesellschaft* (association or society) prevails. This process of transition started many centuries ago, was accelerated by changes begun during the Renaissance, and then accentuated particularly by those resulting from the Industrial Revolution. It is a transformation which is inexorable and which we cannot evade. The process which brings about the steady yielding of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is our fate, no escape or return to *Gemeinschaft* is possible. His distinction provides a *sociological* explanation of the rise of capitalism, the modern state, and the whole modernist mind-set. What others found in economic or technological or military areas of causality, Tonnies found in the strictly social, the area of community and its sociological displacement by non-communal modes of organization, law, and polity. The rise of capitalism and the modern nation state are both made aspects of the more fundamental social change from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. Whereas in Marx the loss of community is dealt with as the consequence of capitalism, or in Weber as the outcome of rationalization, in Tonnies' these are both treated as the consequence of the loss of community. (Nisbet 1966, p 74-80; Pappenheim 1959, Ch 4; Worsley 1970, p409).

Tonnies believes that a distinction should be made between two essentially different bases of human association, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* is usually translated as 'community' and is characteristic of the pre-industrial world. Community life is 'natural' and founded on duty and fellow-feeling, on close relationships and cooperative neighbourliness, based on a common experience, tradition, and stable social structures; people feel they belong to a community, they have intentions and values that are bound together, they *relate* to each other rather than merely *associate*. *Gesellschaft* translates as society or association, and is associated with the rise of industrialization and the decline of community; a growing individualization of human relationships, with contractualism, artificiality, individualism, impersonality, competition, and egoism becoming gradually more

dominant, and proceeding from choice and will or sheer self-interest rather than from the complex of affective states, habits, and traditions that underlies *Gemeinschaft*.

*Gemeinschaft*-like relationships are personal, enduring, and based upon a clear understanding of each person's position in society. Social hierarchy is clearly defined and fixed. The status of an individual was largely ascribed rather than achieved, and geographical and social mobility were both limited. Culturally, community was relatively homogenous, and enforced by well-recognized moral custodians – the church and the family. The system of beliefs they supported were clear and commonsensical, part of the taken-for-granted everyday beliefs and values of the entire membership of the community. The pillars of *Gemeinschaft* were kinship and territoriality or neighborhood – the solidarity with other members of the family or clan and with those who lived in the same place. The core of *Gemeinschaft* was the sentimental attachment to the conventions and mores of a beloved place enshrined in a tradition handed down over the generations. Within this territory the enduring and close-knit relationships were also characterized by greater emotional cohesion, depth of sentiment, and greater continuity. (Lee and Newby 1983, p44)

Regarding labour, *Gemeinschaft* (to the extent that it is capable of doing so) transforms all labor into a kind of art, giving it style, dignity, and charm, or makes of it a calling and an honor. It is *Gemeinschaft* when the worker, artisan or professional - gives himself limitlessly to his job without calculation of units of time and compensation. *Gemeinschaft* of spirit and mind based on common work or calling and thus on common beliefs.

Thus, *Gemeinschaft*. does not come into being through planning and conscious organization but through tradition. Its members are bound to each other as whole persons rather than as fragmentary individuals. In the *Gemeinschaft* unity prevails. It connotes moral unity, rootedness, intimacy, and kinship, reciprocity, and these pervade every aspect of life, though at considerable cost to personal mobility and autonomy. Social practices and institutions are infused with intrinsic worth. Beliefs and institutions are 'affirmed' rather than chosen or designed, they are valued for themselves, not for extraneous ends.

*Gesellschaft* is a relationship that is contractual in its nature, deliberately established by individuals who realize that they cannot pursue their proper interests effectively in isolation and therefore band together. From the start it is instrumental. In pure *Gesellschaft*, which for Tonnies is symbolized by the modern economic enterprise and the network of legal and moral relations in which it resides, we move to association that is no longer cast in the mold of either kinship or friendship. The difference lies in the fact that all its activities are restricted to a definite end and definite means of attaining it. The essence of *Gesellschaft* is rationality and calculation. Social relations in *Gesellschaft* are based on self-interest, shallowness, and calculation. People see each other as a means to the furtherance of their own self-interested goals, they use and exploit others. People are not valued for themselves but instrumentally ; vested interest and rational calculation dominate sentiment and emotion. As Tonnies' summarises the distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* -

“The theory of the *Gesellschaft* deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings which superficially resembles the *Gemeinschaft* insofar as the individuals live and dwell together peacefully. However, in *Gemeinschaft* they remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors. In the *Gesellschaft*, as contrasted with the *Gemeinschaft*, we find no actions that can be derived from an *a priori* and necessarily existing unity; no actions, therefore, which manifest the will and the spirit of the unity even if performed by the individual; no actions which, insofar as they are performed by the individual, take place on behalf of those united with him. In the *Gesellschaft* such actions do not exist. On the contrary, here everybody is by himself and isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others.” (Tonnies 1963, p 64)

Individuals who enter a *Gesellschaft* do so with only a fraction of their being, that is, with that part of their existence which corresponds to the specific purpose of the organization. Members of a taxpayer's association, or individuals who own stock in a company, are related to each other not as whole persons, but with only that part of themselves which is concerned with being a taxpayer or shareholder. They leave out, or are supposed to leave out, of their association all the other qualities which constitute their lives - their family background, their friendships and hatreds, their religious beliefs, political loyalties, and so on. Thus they remain loosely connected



and essentially remote from each other. So deep is the separation between man and man in *Gesellschaft* that everybody is by himself and isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others. Thus *Gesellschaft* becomes a social world in which latent hostility and potential war are inherent in the relationship of one to another. (Pappenheim, op cit p67).

Tonnies does not consider substantive empirical contrasts of human relationships to be as sharp as the two concepts might imply. He uses each as a kind of ideal-type, and is thus able to show *Gesellschaft* elements in the traditional family as easily as he can *Gemeinschaft* elements in the modern corporation.

But there are positive moral elements in *Gesellschaft* ? Without *Gesellschaft* and its special constellation of social and intellectual elements, modern liberalism and many aspects of modern culture could not have arisen.

“The city is the home of *Gesellschaft*. and the centre of science and culture which go hand in hand with commerce and industry. Here the arts must make a living; they are exploited in a capitalistic way. Thoughts spread and change with astonishing rapidity. Speeches and books, through mass distribution, become stimuli of far-reaching importance.” (Nisbet 1966, p 77).

But with the advance of *Gesellschaft* and its cultural brilliance, must go the disintegration of *Gemeinschaft*.

### **Wesenwille and Kurwille.**

Parallel with his distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Tonnies distinguishes between two forms of human will. The first, which he calls *Wesenwille* (translated as ‘natural will’ or ‘integral will’) is ‘impulsive’. It is a spontaneous expression of human drives and desires, of natural disposition. The second is *Kurwille*, primarily shaped by the deliberative processes of the rational mind. It lacks the qualities of spontaneity and impulsiveness which sustain *Wesenwille*. It admits only decisions which result from a cautious assessment of all the pros and cons and from prudent choosing between them. (The first part of the word *Kurwille* is derived from the old German verb *Kuren* which means to choose). *Wesenwille* is ‘the will which includes the thinking’; *Kurwille* is ‘the thinking which encompasses the will. (Pappenheim op cit, p 70). As Selznick describes it, *Wesenwille* –

“expresses a condition or state of being rather than a set purpose. It is

motivation or conduct that emerges from growth and adaptation ...from the accumulation of experiences and commitments and from the formation of character; it reveals a person's authentic self....A community based on 'natural will' is person-centred. Its institutions recognize and uphold continuities of self and society. Emotion, preference, and rationality are governed by socially accepted criteria of intrinsic worth". (Selznick 1992, p 366)

Individuals in whom *Wesenwille* is predominant show a quality of directness in their character. Their personalities seem to be of one piece and animate all their actions. This unity is lost when *Kurwille* prevails. Objectives are pursued, not because they emanate from an inner necessity and mean personal fulfillment, but because well weighed considerations have proven them advantageous. Conclusions of this kind are reached only after sober calculation, especially of the probable costs to be incurred and their ratio to the anticipated results. The awareness of means and ends as two separate and independent categories is the essence of *Kurwille*, whereas both are blended and remain undifferentiated in *Wesenwille*.

"Kurwille connotes...choice that is both rational and arbitrary...goals do not emerge from tradition or from the fabric of social life; they are not expressions of identity and self-conception.....ends are forever posited anew, in response to changing circumstances and desires, by independent and rational actors...the choice of ends is arbitrary, but their pursuit is governed by rational calculation. Thus *gesellschaft* breeds a positivist, utilitarian mentality. Within that framework neither ends nor means have intrinsic worth". (Selznick 1992, p 366).

Pappenheim illustrates this difference between *Wesenwille* and *Kurwille* in relation to work/employment. The work of many has become depersonalized and is done not for its own sake but for an extrinsic end. Work of this kind requires a society in which we have learned to differentiate between means and ends, to avail ourselves of means which have no necessary inner relationship to our life and its goals and which we *choose* to use because we have figured out the advantages they are likely to yield. It can be performed only where our activities are directed by the calculations of *Kurwille*. Pappenheim rejects the view that this split between means and ends is the very essence of work, seeing this view as based on a tendency to narrow the concept of work and to focus too exclusively on specific manifestations of the work life in modern business civilization. Though this is not to say that all modern work

activities are depersonalizing and instrumental, but that the contrast with the past is pronounced.

Whether in employment or social relations generally, *Kurwille* directs us to choose the company of individuals toward whom we do not necessarily feel drawn but who may be instrumentally useful to us. It may even lead us to suppress or conceal our dislikes, because we realize that it is useful to know the right people and to cultivate 'friendship' with them. Thus in personal relations as in work *Kurwille* divorces means and ends. It makes us use humans as tools for purposes which are not inherent in them but are devised by us. *Kurwille* man thinks, he calculates, he reckons his advantage. To him everything becomes a means to an end. Notably his relationship to others, and thus to associations of all kinds, begins to change. He dissolves and concludes pacts and alliances according to his interests, as means to his ends. Although he finds it difficult to extricate himself from certain relationships into which he was born, he reflects on their usefulness and in his thoughts, at least, makes them dependent on his will.

*Wesenwille* leads to a very different kind of human relations. Individuals find difficulty in overcoming their likes and dislikes. They do not associate with others because as cautious strategists they have figured out that it is useful to be 'good mixers' and to choose the right, influential, acquaintances. Instead they feel a strong attachment and a genuine closeness to the persons with whom they make friends.

For Tonnies an affinity exists between *Wesenwille* and *Gemeinschaft*, on the one hand, and between *Kurwille* and *Gesellschaft* on the other. In Tonnies' words, *Wesenwille* carries the conditions for *Gemeinschaft* and *Kurwille* develops *Gesellschaft*. As *Gemeinschaft* embraces all aspects of its members' lives, *Wesenwille* and its manifestations embody and express the whole of a person's being. On the other hand as individuals join a *Gesellschaft* only with a segment of their existence their lives become subdivided and compartmentalised. This correlation between *Gemeinschaft* and *Wesenwille* and between *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille* is important for grasping Tonnies thinking on the historical sequence between the two forms of will. Since he sees history as leading from an age of *Gemeinschaft* toward an age of *Gesellschaft*, he also sees it as proceeding from *Wesenwille* to *Kurwille*. In

particular he believes that the modern period can be understood only when the triumph of the forces of *Gesellschaft* and *Kürwille* is recognized.

Nisbet (1966) draws the comparison and similarity between Tonnies and Weber, who saw European history as a kind of falling away from the patriarchalism and brotherhood that had characterized medieval society. For Weber this is the consequence of the process of 'rationalization'. But it strongly resembles *Gesellschaft*, and Tonnies' dichotomy seems implicit in many of Weber's own contrasts : 'traditional' and 'rational' types of authority and society; his four types of social action: orientation to interpersonal ends, to absolute value-ends, to emotional or affectual states, and to tradition and convention. We also find it in Weber's treatment of types of 'solidary social relationship', where he makes the fundamental distinction between '*communal*' and '*associative*'. These are types that Weber finds everywhere in human history, and they become for him exactly what *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are for Tonnies - ideal types. A relationship is *communal* when it is based on a subjective feeling of the parties that they belong to each other, that they are implicated in each other's total existence. Examples are the closely bound military unit, the labor union, the religious brotherhood, the ties of lovers, in addition to such obvious types as family and neighborhood. A relationship is *associative* for Weber when it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interest or a similarly motivated agreement. It does not matter whether it is oriented to expediency or moral value; it is associative if it flows from rational calculation of interest or will rather than from emotional identification. The purest instances of associative relationships are to be found in the free market or open society; associations that represent compromise of opposed but complementary interests; the voluntary association that rests solely on self-interest or belief and contractual assent.

### **Pseudo Gemeinschaft.**

In the 1950's and '60s American functionalist sociologists criticised the preoccupation with the one-way trend from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. They argued that modern society has given rise to many associations which have the character of *Gemeinschaft* and that Americans especially were members of numerous organizations, clubs, lodges, fraternities, and so on. But as Pappenheim suggests, this argument often fails



to ask whether the very need for 'joining' is not indicative of the isolation felt by individuals who live in *Gesellschaft*. They also focus primarily on the large *quantity* of societies into which people enter and neglect to consider the *quality* of relations predominating in these organizations. The character of *Gemeinschaft* can appear as the facade of a group but is frequently nothing but an appearance - *Pseudo-Gemeinschaft*, as Robert Merton referred to it, is a widely spread phenomenon (Pappenheim op cit , p68). It was documented in a series of books in the late 1950's and '60s : '*Organization Man*' (W.H.Whyte), '*The Hidden Persuaders*', '*The Status Seekers*' (Vance Packard), '*The Image*' (Daniel Boorstin), '*The Lonely Crowd*' (David Riesman). All of these documented the underlying trend of *Gesellschaft* and Kurwille packaged in the guise of pseudo *Gemeinschaft*. Their recurrent theme was the manipulation of people as employees, consumers, and citizens, summed up in Erich Fromm's notion of the '*marketing character*'. (Fromm 1949, p67).

## **Conclusion.**

The process which brings about the steady yielding of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is our fate, no escape or return to *Gemeinschaft* is possible. Tonnies sees the development of European society as being from unions of *Gemeinschaft* to associations of *Gemeinschaft*, then to associations of *Gesellschaft* and finally to unions of *Gesellschaft*. The first three phases reflect a growing individualization and impersonality of human relationships. The fourth phase represents modern society's effort to recover some of the communal securities of earlier society – through techniques of human relations, social security, and job insurance within the context of *Gesellschaft*-like private or public corporations. This fourth phase is likened to *pseudo-Gemeinschaft* in its more extreme manifestations (Nisbet 1966, p74).

Earlier in the Chapter we discussed the illusory aspects of community – its subjective and psychological basis in the '*spirit*', or '*feeling*', or shared sense of *meaning*, the subjective experience of common *identity*, all functioning as a psychological basis for the *unity* of comm-unity when its structural and moral basis was weak. *Gemeinschaft* seems to display this strongly, but its strength was founded in stable and engulfing social structures, rigid social hierarchy, and limited social and geographical mobility. Paradoxically, scope for individuality and self-realization in



some form or other, but within ascribed roles, almost certainly was possible. But systematic exploitation and injustice were built into the social structure and culture, though not necessarily perceived as such. Solidarity and mutual concern existed, but presumably only within, rather than between, social classes, *noblesse oblige* apart. Like any ideal type the concept of *Gemeinschaft* pushes to its logical limit the characterisation of the type. What seems to be omitted in this characterisation of the ideal is the insularity, parochialism, monitoring and surveillance, 'village idiocy', lack of liberty, domination, and exploitation, that would also be typical of it. There is no possible return to the ideal, because the social structure which supported both the reality and the illusion has gone.

With *Gemeinschaft*'s counterpart, *Wesenwille*, it is a different story. *Gemeinschaft* originates in the social, *Wesenwille* in the *natural* and the *individual*. Making allowances for a century change in terminological niceties, *Wesenwille* might well be seen as the spirit or animating force which underlies self-determination, self-realization, and authenticity and we return to this later in the Chapter.

The problem is *Gesellschaft*, and its cosmetic counterpart *Pseudo Gemeinschaft*, and currently we seem to have three broad options open to us –

1. *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille*.
2. *Pseudo Gemeinschaft* and *Kurwille*.
3. *Wesenwille* and Communalism.

The first two link directly with what we discussed previously as external goods and value, whereas the third links with internal goods and value.

### **Individualism and Individuality.**

In previous Chapters I have suggested that there is a relation between inviolability and ethical autonomy, self-determination/self-realization, and internal goods, that these complement and reinforce one another, and come together in a concept of a moral self. These in turn imply and require some complementary substantive conception of community along the lines proposed in the earlier part of

this Chapter. This 'moralised' but open-ended conception of communalism is probably as near as we are ever likely to get, or want to get, to *Gemeinschaft*.

The link between *Gesellschaft*, *Kurwille*, and individualism is so explicit that it requires no further elaboration. *Gesellschaft* is a world where instrumentalism predominates, an *external goods* ethos, an amoralised community. Tonnies' problem of *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille*, or Weber's 'rationalization', or Marx's capitalism, all directly lead to the world of 'external goods' and value discussed in Chapter 6. The characteristics of individualism that contrast with individuality all fit into the picture of *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille* : limited inviolability, agency, self-realization or authenticity via external goods, moral minimalism.

More complex is the connection between individuality and *Gemeinschaft*. The latter can be viewed in isolation as a social structure, and assessed in those terms, or as a social structure that enabled the development and expression of *Wesenwille*. What seems to have animated *Gemeinschaft* is not the attractions of its structure as such, but that its structure did not repress *Wesenwille*. *Gemeinschaft* has gone forever, but *Wesenwille* is always retrievable, it is a part of the '*natural*' as I have described it in previous Chapters and part of what animates self-determination and self-realization. But it requires an appropriate social environment to enable its development and expression. What has been described above as 'communalism' is such an environment, without the structural and cultural drawbacks of *Gemeinschaft*.

### **Liberalism and Community.**

Mason's 'ordinary concept' of community (points 1 to 4) - which he says is 'typical of recent Anglo-American political philosophy' (Mason 2000 p 21) - lacks specific substance and thereby proposes no particular conception of community and poses no particular challenge to *Gesellschaft*, *Kurwille*, or the ensuing external goods ethos. As suggested previously, all societies or communities require some level of ongoing interdependence and cooperation to get things done, and these will match up with Mason's four points to some degree or other, so there is no necessary contradiction between these points and *Gesellschaft*. Mason's points (5) and (6) *in combination*

represent a direct challenge to it, though the issue of the *degree* to which they exist would remain an issue. Mason suggests that –

“The idea at the heart of most liberal conceptions of political community, including Rawls’s, is that the major institutions of society should be based upon a conception of justice which is acceptable to each citizen”. (Mason 2000 p68)

This idea of public justifiability has many versions, but in general it is thought to provide liberals with an account of political legitimacy, and provides the basis for a conception of political community. According to this view, persons are members of a political community if, as a result of the exercise of reason, they –

- endorse the conception of justice which underlies their major institutions.
- identify with those institutions because they endorse that conception.
- acknowledge each other as members.
- have a commitment to sustaining these institutions and cooperate to achieve this common purpose.

This is Mason’s ‘ordinary concept’ of community. What it seems to amount to is : if people rationally identify with, and endorse, the conception of justice prevailing in their society then it could be said to be a political community. Once again, there is something deeply unsatisfying about *this* conception of public justifiability. The notions of ‘rationally’, ‘identify’, ‘endorse’ would all require clarification, whilst their practice would require some clear standard of what constituted consent rather than compliance. It seems to amount to saying that the conception of justice is justified if people appear to feel it is justified. Its actual character and specific substance is again, ‘vague and ambiguous’, according to Mason (2000, p69). If a specific conception of justice pervades a particular culture, and people are socialized to that culture, and by habit, tradition, practice and experience they come to take that conception for granted, then that conception will be justified. So the criterion or standard of justice and justifiability is *successful socialization*, rather than anything else.

This is basically Mason’s ‘ordinary concept’ of community, endorsed by liberal contractarians (Mason p 69), who are concerned to further their own conception of the good, whatever that may be. Though it requires justice as they conceive of it, it

does not presuppose the existence of any non-instrumental mutual concern between citizens. Citizens endorse the conception of justice which prevails because it embodies principles which operate to their own advantage. In contrast, the liberal-contractualist conception is a version of the moralised notion of political community because it embodies the requirement of mutual concern. As Mason states it, members of a political community -

“are mutually concerned because they attach non-instrumental value to being in a position to justify to one another the principles which underlie their social arrangements”. (Mason 2000 p 71)

This feels weaker, or different, to Mason’s earlier description of mutual concern –

“solidarity between its members : mutual concern ; minimally - members must give each other’s interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning”.

Either way, as argued earlier, ‘mutual concern’ seems empty without the second point of the moralised conception : there should be no systematic exploitation or injustice. One in the absence of the other would be a contradiction. The first without the second would be hollow. The second without the first is not possible.

However, one must assume that what the liberal-contractualist position ultimately refers to, or converges with, is the liberal-egalitarian conception of the Right and the Good, discussed in Chapter 3, as the basis of community. I referred earlier to Tonnies’ view of the development of European society as being from unions of *Gemeinschaft* to associations of *Gemeinschaft*, then to associations of *Gesellschaft* and finally to unions of *Gesellschaft*. The fourth phase represents modern society’s effort to recover some of the communal securities of earlier society – through techniques of ‘human relations’, ‘social security’, and ‘job insurance’ within the context of *Gesellschaft*-like private or public corporations. This fourth phase is likened to *pseudo-Gemeinschaft* in its more extreme manifestations (Nisbet 1966, p74). Viewed from the perspective of individuality, the evolving liberal Right is an illustration of this fourth phase. Whether contractarian or contractualist it remains contractual or quasi-contractual in its conception of political obligation and community, in contrast to the non-contractual approach of individuality.

More recent attempts to complement or broaden the liberal-egalitarian Right through notions of *citizenship* or *civic virtue*, etc, seem to have both communitarian and liberal sources, and harbour some radical potential, though one danger is that they become a form of pseudo *Gemeinschaft*. They might be seen as being *linked* to Mason's earlier point (5) : 'mutual concern ; minimally - members must give each other's interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning'. Though as noted above, this would need to be combined with a clear presence of Mason's point (6) –'there must be no systematic exploitation or injustice'. Citizenship and civic virtue are always double-sided : they can lead in the direction of points (5) and (6), or they can be more cosmetic, a demand for good manners and reasonable behaviour amongst the underclass, a demand for their participation and inclusion, without removing the structural sources of their apathy, bad manners, or alienation.

Such developments might also be seen as being an evolving discursive change in what I have described as individualism's 'moral minimalism', the development of a liberal version of ethical autonomy and the moral self. Its difficulty is the original liberal problem identified in Chapter 2 : the relationship between inviolability and the private sphere. The traditional liberal separation of the self- and other-regarding spheres, the right to pursue ones own conception of the good, makes it difficult to impose a standard of 'good citizenship', and the danger is that the latter never becomes more than an '*external good*', practised in public for fear of sanctions, but not committed to as an '*internal good*'. When the hurricane hits, it slips away.

## **CONCLUSION : COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUALITY.**

Conceptions of comprehensive inviolability, self-determination and self-realization, internal goods, and the moral self, all imply, and require, some complementary substantive conception of community. Communalism is such a conception, an open-ended but 'moralised' conception of community, that is sufficiently strong and flexible structurally that it fosters a social individuality, diversity, and difference, a community that rejects the *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille* of individualism, but revives the *Wesenwille* of *Gemeinschaft*. Communalism is the collective partner of individuality and, as such, it must embody and enable those features of individuality



discussed in previous Chapters. As individuality starts with comprehensive inviolability then it must end with a 'moralised' community in the sense described here. The structural and moral foundation of communalism is the absence of systematic exploitation or injustice, which then enables mutual concern between its members in the forms of social reciprocity or mutuality. These provide the structural and cultural context for comprehensive inviolability, and therefore for all the ensuing features of individuality. This foundation creates a community that is sufficiently strong and open structurally that it can safely foster individuality, diversity and difference whilst generating a commitment to the community as an internal good. There is therefore no contradiction between the supposed 'self-interestedness' of individuality and the assumed 'harmony of interests' of community.

With regard to the role of the State within communalism. As suggested in Chapter 3, there might be at least three forms of perfectionism and anti-perfectionism –

**Individual perfectionism** / anti-perfectionism : the 'perfectionist' claim that *individuality* as described in previous Chapters is a universal objective value which makes some ways of life and some types of character better than others, but that the pursuit of these is an individual quest, a moral vocation, to be pursued autonomously by each individual.

**State perfectionism** / anti-perfectionism : as above but, additionally, that the 'better' ways of life and character should be encouraged, and the worse be penalised, by State action.

**Social perfectionism** / anti-perfectionism : as above, but emphasis would be on the role of society and culture in enabling the better, and constraining the worse, ways of life.

Individuality and communalism would consistently support *individual perfectionism* in the forms outlined in previous Chapters. It could be open-minded about the other two forms, but would see the 'social' as more fundamental than the State in enabling or constraining individuality. But if the 'social' does constrain the development of individuality then an enabling or advocacy strategy by the State could be favoured as a counter-balance (Kernohan 1998, p 96).

## CHAPTER 9 : CONCLUSION.

The general claim of this thesis is that there are two quite different discourses of the individual – individualism and individuality – but that the discursive dominance of the former, in the shape of liberal-individualism, has hidden the quite different discourse of individuality. The main contribution of the thesis has been the attempt to retrieve the discourse of individuality by identifying some of its key features and, where possible, showing how these differ from liberal-individualism.

The features of individualism and individuality drawn throughout the thesis are in some respects contrasts between two *ideal types*, designed to capture features of empirical reality by their analytical accentuation, but more coherent than the realities they seek to describe. An ideal type is not a description of any concrete empirical reality, but a construct used to elucidate certain of its features by extracting and conceptualising essential ‘traits’ which are then compared with concrete phenomena. In this sense individualism and individuality are rival conceptual models and explanatory tools, a way of drawing connections and inter-relations, devices through which meaning can be imposed upon a reality and evidence that are open to different interpretations. However, we can never construct models and develop theories simply by the process of abstraction from, and idealization of, the concrete social relations found within actual societies. Societies are invariably structured in ways that will obscure their underlying and central mechanisms, so any process of concept formation based on the way a society empirically appears to be is likely to be misleading, inadequate, or ideological. In this respect, the precise nature of the link between an ideal type and empirical reality is open to some dispute, and there will be differences in the level of abstraction and simplicity of ideal types, and this applies to individualism and individuality.

In the case of individualism, the relation between ideal type and empirical reality drawn here is stronger and less abstract than is the case with individuality, simply because individualism is a defining feature of actual liberal societies. But individuality as an ideal type also partly derives from this context, as a part of its

normative critique. In liberal-individualist societies there will be competing and conflicting interests; and the match between its ideas and empirical reality will be characterised by flaws and contradictions. These will lead to different interpretations, to divergent practices and claims which then, over time, will lead to its ongoing *normative critique*. So the distinction between individualism and individuality is not simply between ideal types, but also both a *historical* and a *normative* one, and both the latter inform the construction of the ideal types.

Regarding the *historical* distinction between individualism and individuality, it reflects divergent traditions, models, and values within the history of ideas, social movements, and social practices. The discourse of individuality exists as a loose 'tradition' embodied in the work of a disparate collection of social and political theorists and commentators, or the activities of groups and individuals. As suggested above, some of this emerges from within the context of liberal-individualism itself. But as a tradition in social philosophy and political theory it dates from classical Greece, but is preceded by philosophical Taoism, is found within the Gnostic tradition, was clearly evident in European Romanticism, is represented within Marxian theory, Socialism, Anarchism, Ecologism, and Feminism, and is most recently found in Existentialism and Humanistic Psychology and their many offshoots including new-age, counter-cultural, and some self-improvement, movements and ideas. This is not to say that all these are founded on a concept of individuality but that it, rather than individualism, is one of their core features. One of the interesting aspects of individuality is precisely its relevance to, or compatibility with, a range of political ideologies, whilst also being one possible ongoing source of critique, evolving tendencies, and adaptation of concepts and perspectives, within liberalism itself.

Despite this, the specific distinction between individualism and individuality is generally absent from contemporary mainstream political debate and practice as found in liberal egalitarian, libertarian, communitarian, and social democratic disputes. The focus is rather on 'autonomy', the opposition between negative liberty and effective liberty, matters of tolerance and intolerance, issues of distribution and

access to equal opportunities, resources, and citizenship, and whether the role of the State should be a minimal or an enabling one. Reform and egalitarian versions of liberalism, and social democracy, ultimately rely on a healthy capitalism to resource such re-distribution or welfare schemes, though they may move in a more state interventionist or 'collectivist' direction. But, as suggested in Chapter 1, individualism and collectivism are not opposites but a pair, but with the appearance of being opposites when viewed from within a context of individualism. Regarding the place of individuality within the wider range of political ideologies, we touch on this below in the section on Having and Being.

Nevertheless, as suggested above, the distinction between individualism and individuality is also a *normative* one within liberal-individualist societies in so far as both reflect a concern with the complex and contested web of norms, standards, concepts, and ideals through which we make value judgements; seek standards that enable us to judge human action or prescribe the best course of action; a concern for what should, ought, or must be, rather than a descriptive statement of what is. One effect of liberal-individualism's discursive dominance is to foster the view that there is actually only one broad discourse of the individual, and that individuality is merely a sub-current within this. Within the meta-discourse of liberal-individualism there are clearly different ways of being an individualist – ontological, methodological, and moral individualists – as well as different theoretical and national traditions. Libertarianism and liberal-egalitarianism are simply the mainstream examples. On moral individualism itself, a key theme of the thesis, liberalism encompasses a range of quite diverse and competing perspectives, Utilitarians, Kantians, and Millians. Clearly, liberal-individualism can take many diverse forms, some of which would seem mutually exclusive but which are nevertheless taken in conjunction as forming the bedrock of contemporary liberalism. But what some of these forms suggest is that liberalism is also internally unstable, in that one cannot consistently endorse all of its elements at the same time within the same discourse. What all of this expresses, and fuels, is normative debate within liberal-individualism itself, but also its normative critique, and this is one of the sources of individuality.

Regarding this normative distinction, individuality would critique liberal-individualism (and its collectivist/communitarian partners), on the grounds that it does not deliver the liberty, equality, fraternity, or well-being that it appears to promise, or delivers them only in limited and specific forms. As the Prometheus myth discussed in Chapter 2 suggests, humans are not biologically pre-determined, other than being uniquely equipped with the potential to do and create. We are incomplete and vulnerable, beings of potential, rather than fixed and finalised. So our development is dependent upon others and the social world we are born into, whether they enable or constrain.. From the start this is a political situation, MacPherson's 'developmental power', the ability to use and develop one's capacities. As a being of potential, each individual is inviolable, an inviolability which creates ethical and moral responsibilities towards both self and others.

But it is precisely here that liberal-individualism and its partner capitalism both betray and vindicate Prometheus. They vindicate Prometheus in the sense that they have probably been the most creatively dynamic societies to ever exist, via the development of markets, the growth of technology and its material fruits, rising material standards of living for its beneficiaries, whilst simultaneously celebrating and promoting the principles of liberty, equality, toleration, democracy, etc. But they simultaneously betray Prometheus because their formal and limited conception of inviolability, and therefore of what liberty, equality, toleration, and democracy mean, routinely leads to the frustration, stifling, and destruction of human potentialities. Individualism is not alone in this of course, other types of society have done much worse, but liberalism promised something different and better. Its limitations are nowhere better illustrated than at the heart of its perceived success – its relationship to capitalism, a relationship which would seem symbiotic, but remains theoretically ambiguous within liberalism. But this symbiosis with capitalism is such that liberal-individualism does not recognize the issue of the relationship between internal and external goods. The prevailing liberal-consensus is to diagnose, interpret, and seek to solve issues and problems as though they are entirely a matter of the distribution of external goods, a question of '*having*' rather than also a matter of '*being*'. And this would be one starting point for its normative critique.



## THE MAIN CLAIMS OF THE THESIS.

The major claims of the thesis are outlined in the series of points below. As suggested above, in this form these are contrasting ideal types, explanatory tools, more coherent and extreme than the realities they seek to describe. But they are nevertheless fundamentally divergent.

## HAVING AND BEING.

Perhaps the fundamental or most crucial difference between individualism and individuality can be stated crudely as being the contrast between '*having*' and '*being*', discussed in the Introduction, and then in Chapter 6 in relation to the distinction between external goods (having) and internal goods (being).

It has been argued throughout the thesis that what is characteristic of humans is that they are doers and creators – 'doing' is central to all lives, so the issue is for what purpose, and the usual contrast here is between 'having' and 'being' -

Being ----- DOING ----- Having

'Doing' entails both having and being, but it can be primarily for the purpose of one or the other. The record and reputation of liberal individualism is towards the '*having*' side, MacPherson's 'maximisation of utilities; whereas individuality's is towards '*being*', his 'maximisation of powers'. A 'having' mode does not exclude 'being', but it's conception of 'being' will be characterized by a 'having' mode. Ditto for individuality - it's conception of the 'having' mode will be characterized by an ethos of 'being'. Individualism can assimilate the concepts and terminology of individuality, but in the process it converts them to a having mode. Thus, what inviolability, self-determination, or authenticity, etc, mean within a 'having' mode is

quite different from what they mean in a 'being' mode. And in this respect there will be a difference between 'individuality' and 'pseudo individuality'.

The record, overt or covert, of all varieties of liberal-individualism (though not necessarily always acknowledged in liberal social and political philosophy) is in practice primarily about individual development, achievement, and freedom of choice in relation to '*doing and having*' in the external world : economic activity and enterprise, focus on instrumental reason, the satisfaction of desires and self-interest, the development of markets, and the growth of technology, productivity, and their material fruits, generally in pursuit of a self-interested acquisition and accumulation of material wealth, possessions, status, and power ; a meritocratic inequality and competition; the satisfaction of self-interest and a materialistic acquisitive urge, giving rise to a widespread 'me first' pursuit of self-gratification, characterised by competition, manipulation, and exploitation. A social structure based upon the market relations of *doing and having* leads to the development of particular types of working life, production and employment, job design, and work relations; particular types of individual preferences and desires ; and particular types of individual character and interpersonal relations.

The thesis has argued that integral to this 'doing and having' mode of individualism are a series of linked characteristics : a limited conception of individual inviolability; an anti-perfectionist emphasis on negative liberty and agency rather than autonomy ; scepticism regarding self-realization and authenticity; a preoccupation with 'external goods' – the pursuit of self-interest via material goods; an 'other-regarding' morality that leads to a moral minimalism; and a limited conception of community.

In contrast, the focus of individuality is more about an individual development, achievement, and choice in which '*doing and having*' is subordinate to '*doing and being*', external goods subordinate to internal goods : activities engaged in for the pleasure and intrinsic satisfaction they generate, because we are committed to them, because they enable the creative use and development of ones personal powers, ones talents, abilities and skills, and because they empower and enable self-

determination, or contribute to a valued standard or wider good. This deliberative shaping of a life of 'ones own' is enabled or constrained by its structural and interpersonal context, and this entails ethical and moral responsibilities towards both oneself and others, for the well-being of each is inseparable from the flourishing of others. Thus, the thesis argues that individuality is characterised by a comprehensive conception of individual inviolability ; autonomy as self-determination inseparably linked to self-realization and authenticity ; a focus on 'internal goods'; the interdependence of the self- and other-regarding; and a conception of community which fosters these.

This broad distinction between having and being is mostly absent from mainstream political ideologies. As discussed above, the focus is on the distribution of 'having', the opposition between negative liberty and effective liberty, issues of distribution and access to equal opportunities and resources, and whether the role of the State should be a minimal or an enabling one.

Regarding the wider range of political ideologies, there is a very rough dividing line between two extremes : those on the side of 'having', and those on the side of 'being'. For example –

**Having** : imperfect/self-interested human nature ; inequality and elitism; weak rationality therefore strong authority and government, and emphasis on duty ; or strong instrumental reason and therefore negative liberty, limited government, and rights ; constraints on democracy. Varieties of conservatism, fascism, and classical liberalism, all of which would be opposed to individuality for different reasons.

**Being** : those on the side of adaptable/developmental/perfectible human nature, full effective and positive liberty, egalitarianism, democracy, and an enabling State as necessary. For example : both individualist and anarcho-communist versions of anarchism; democratic socialism and Marxism, though not Statist/collectivist versions of socialism ; varieties of ecologism; and socialist and radical feminism. For all of these individuality would have a relevance and compatibility.

Regarding socialism, its collectivist reputation and record in the 20<sup>th</sup> century seems not intrinsic to the ideology but had more to do with either the urgency of reforming *capitalism* via social democratic reforms in the developed capitalist societies, or the urgency of forced development via State control in underdeveloped countries. In both contexts, collectivism was in practice simply the collective mirror image of individualism, a state interventionist/welfarist/corporatist reaction to the extremes of liberal-capitalism rather than an alternative to it. Their opposites are individuality and communalism, and these are compatible with the core principles of socialist ideology, rather than its 20<sup>th</sup> century record and reputation, and would be a necessary contribution to the regeneration of socialist ideology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **TWO TYPES OF MORAL INDIVIDUALISM – LIMITED AND COMPREHENSIVE INVIOABILITY.**

The second major claim of the thesis is that individualism and individuality have divergent conceptions of individual inviolability, so that there are two different forms of moral individualism - '*limited inviolability*', which is characteristic of liberal-individualism, and the '*comprehensive inviolability*' of individuality. Limited inviolability takes the view that Society and State should allow the individual to act according to their own preferences/conception of the good, as long as one respects the inviolability of others. Comprehensive inviolability takes the view that the individual's own preferences/conception of the good should respect both one's own inviolability as well as that of others, so that 'inviolability' constraints are placed on one's self-regarding actions and conception of the good. If you do not acknowledge and respect those characteristics in yourself which confer inviolability, then it seems unlikely that you will respect the inviolability of others, not least because your conception of what this means will be limited, and this will create a tension or conflict between the self- and other-regarding.

### **Individualism and Limited Inviolability.**

Liberalism's moral individualism is limited because it is not founded on the intrinsic value and inviolability *of* oneself, except in the sense that it seeks to maximise that which is of value *to* oneself, regardless of whether or not this respects those characteristics of oneself which confer inviolability. At the same time it is assumed or implied that this optional inviolability in relation to the self in no way diminishes or constrains a recognition of the inviolability of others. There is no necessary relation or interdependence between the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding'. The inevitable worry arising therefore is that 'other-regarding' responsibilities may be committed to in a minimalist way because not matched by any robust commitment to respecting one's own inviolability. At the same time, there is no clear sense of what inviolability means – no objective standard of it, so no clear standard of harm to others other than what is currently defined as being so.

### **Liberal Anti-Perfectionism assumes Limited Inviolability.**

This liberal-individualist position on inviolability derives from its anti-perfectionism, what I called the '*core liberal model*'. The anti-perfectionist or anti-paternalist claims that what matters is the importance of each individual being free to *make evaluations for his own life*. Inviolability means respecting each individuals '*own*' preferences and evaluations - lives have value only if they are *subjectively endorsed*, '*embraced from the inside*'. The latter is then used to claim that lives are endorsed '*autonomously*'. The anti-perfectionist liberal uses autonomy to describe the inviolability of a private sphere of thought and action within which individuals are *self-owning* and insulated from public/State interference – thus State neutrality in relation to specific conceptions of the good.

Individuality does not reject anti-perfectionism as such, but would argue that it requires an enabling structural and cultural context. Limited inviolability means that this is absent. But the wider problem for liberal-individualism is its ontological individualism.



### **Limited Inviolability assumes Ontological Individualism.**

The second contrasting feature of the different conceptions of moral individualism is that limited inviolability is associated with *ontological individualism* whereas individuality rejects it. Ontological individualism becomes a part of the culture and mindset of liberal societies, it shapes the way people perceive the social world, their conceptions of harm, and their obligations to others, fostering a moral minimalism.

Just because only individual choices and decisions can actualise social structures and cultures does not mean that those choices and decisions are not conditioned or determined by those structures and cultures. To assume that it does mean this would be to equate all action with agency/autonomy, and an effect of this would be to de-emphasise, individualise, or naturalise social and cultural structures and contexts. The consequence of this empiricism is that it subverts inviolability. The ways in which structures and cultures can undermine inviolability are always at risk of being ignored, rendering moral individualism formal and stunted, unable to deal adequately with issues of harm to inviolability arising from the effects of those structures. Ontological individualism therefore reinforces the tendency to commit to 'other-regarding' responsibilities in a minimalist fashion.

### **Ontological Individualism and Anti-Perfectionism Go Together.**

This critique of ontological individualism then takes us back to the heart of the whole anti-perfectionist view of inviolability and autonomy. We saw above that what matters for the anti-perfectionist is the importance of each individual being free to *make evaluations for his own life*, respecting each individuals 'own' preferences, lives having value only if they are *subjectively endorsed*, '*embraced from the inside*', etc. But it is not clear how such individual preferences or conceptions of the good develop, where they emanate from. As we saw in the discussion of negative liberty in Chapter 1, the liberal conception of freedom has been more concerned with the freedom of the agent than it has with the freedom of the agent's will. What people want is shaped by society and history. Individual preferences and endorsement are shaped by expectations which are in turn subject to autonomy subverting mechanisms of socialization, social conditioning, manipulation, etc – endorsement

may be uninformed, misinformed, or disinformed, and these all give us reason for doubting its authority. Any State that seeks to have minimal input in shaping people's preferences will not thereby be neutral regarding these, but will implicitly sanction whatever mainstream conceptions of the good are imparted to people by their culture.

### **The Right.**

The limitations of limited inviolability lead to the liberal notion of the Right. If the standard which people use to endorse their lives is problematic then a remedy is to stipulate what such standards should be, combining subjective endorsement with some standard of what is deemed to be independently and objectively valuable.

There are many problems with the latter, not least it's supposed neutrality. But the fundamental problem is its in-built contradiction : *respect for the inviolability of others that underlies the 'Right' is not compatible with the inviolability of a private sphere of thought and action that underlies the notion of the 'Good'*. If respect for inviolability is not developed and practised in relation to oneself then the basis for having a conception of it, and for practising it in relation to others, seems likely to be fragile. The initiative for, and commitment to, moral autonomy and toleration will therefore often be external to the self rather than necessarily self-determined, and therefore based on compliance rather than consent. So there will be an ongoing tension, or uneasy truce, between the culturally endorsed pursuit of self-interest, and 'moral minimalism', of the private sphere on the one hand, and the expected moral concern of the other-regarding sphere on the other.

### **COMPREHENSIVE INVIOABILITY - THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF ETHICAL AND MORAL AUTONOMY.**

Individuality is committed to comprehensive inviolability – respect for both self and other, the interdependence of the self- and other-regarding, and a rejection of ontological individualism. The individual acknowledges and develops those human characteristics that confer inviolability, and therefore acts with respect towards

themselves. This then forms a necessary foundation for respecting others : there is a symmetry and interdependence between the self- and other-regarding.

Chapter 2 attributes the source of this inviolability to the characteristic of humans as 'doers and creators', not products of fixed instincts or biologically predetermined, but incomplete and vulnerable, a being of potential and potential worth, rather than a worth that is already fixed and finalised. As a being of potential, each individual is inviolable, and this potential and inviolability create responsibilities : for the individual himself, to use his capacities, to develop his potential worth – what I call '*ethical autonomy*', respecting ones own inviolability; and for others to nurture and enable, what I refer to as *moral autonomy*, respecting the inviolability of others. Such ethical and moral autonomy are seen as a form of *individual perfectionism*, similar to Kant's 'imperfect duties' or Millen 'virtue', and contrasts with traditional liberalism's self-interested maximisation of utilities view of human nature discussed in Chapter 1.

This was linked with MacPherson's *developmental power*, the ability to use and develop ones capacities, and this then leads to the emphasis on the importance of *self-determination and self-realization* as key features of the 'ethical autonomy' component of comprehensive inviolability : that all individuals should have the opportunity to realize capacities and potentials; and that as far as possible, individuals should determine and control the course of their life because such self-determination is a necessary means of self-realization. From the start this is a political situation : as beings of potential humans are vulnerable and dependent, and the power exercised over them can be enabling - nurturing, benevolent, and developmental, or constraining - neglectful, exploitative, or oppressive, and the 'moral autonomy' component of inviolability requires the former rather than the latter.

### **LIBERAL AUTONOMY IS AGENCY NOT SELF-DETERMINATION.**

As discussed above, liberal-individualism is not unaware of the subjectivity and 'endorsement' issues surrounding one's own conception of the good, but in practice their focus is 'basic autonomy' or 'agency' rather than personal or authentic

autonomy. Rawls acknowledges that in practice liberal 'autonomy' does not entail *comprehensive* revisability. The prevailing liberal sense of 'autonomy' derives from their anti-perfectionism and limited inviolability, and is essentially a negative liberty one of *basic* autonomy or agency, combined with toleration and an *effective liberty* focus derived from liberal egalitarianism. Essentially : people are capable of being *agents*, having a conception of the good they wish to pursue, but that some moral limits may be placed on this to respect the claims of others (justice). Autonomy in the wider sense of personal or authentic autonomy would be regarded as a perfectionist principle and ideal, a form of 'rational self-direction', focussed around deliberation, revisability, and endorsement. The difficulty with this liberal position is that it is always at risk of seeming to support a view of autonomy as being independent of, or separate from, the 'natural' and the 'social', thus the charge that it is a form of 'abstract individualism', an 'atomistic' and 'asocial' view.

### **INDIVIDUALITY REQUIRES SELF-DETERMINATION.**

Individuality's sense of self-determination is broader and more grounded than liberalism's sense of autonomy as 'rational self-direction', though the two are often used interchangeably by theorists and this leads to some conflating and eroding of their differences. Self-determination (a key requirement of ethical autonomy) is more about power and control over one's own life in its widest sense – '*self-activity*' – in which self-determination is combined with self-realization, the use and development of one's capacities and potentials, and this links the 'individual' to the 'natural' and the 'social' rather than separating the 'individual' from them. MacPherson's 'developmental power' suggests the key factor in determining the amount of power we have is whether the ability to use our capacities is in our own hands or someone else's, and this echoes Mill's link between self-determination and self-development. *Self-activity* combines the notions of free (self-determined) activity with that of creative (self-realizing) activity, and this symbiotic relation between the two gives a foundation to self-determination that is lacking in liberalism's 'autonomy as self-direction'. This links with the idea of self-determination as including processes of self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction, whereas autonomy is more focussed on the latter two.

For individuality, all this is a matter of *individual perfectionism*, tied up with the ethical and moral autonomy that emerges out of the inviolability context : it is a personal responsibility, or an imperfect duty, and not one that can be State defined and led, although a democratic and enabling State may play a facilitating role in relation to effective liberty - access to necessary resources and opportunities.

### **AUTONOMY IS POSSIBLE.**

One of the problems in the 'autonomy' debate is the way in which both critics and supporters of autonomy misconceive the notions of autonomy and the social. If by autonomy is meant that we can be independent of the *natural* and the *social*, in the sense of being *separate* from them, then such imagined absolute autonomy is not only impossible but negates autonomy. In the absence of our very specific natural-social human characteristics we would be beings of instinct with little or no capacity for autonomy. The human potential for autonomy arises precisely *because* of our particular natural-social characteristics, and not despite them. Yet, at the same time, the natural and the social will both enable and constrain autonomy. The potential for autonomy is at the centre of a three-way dialectic, the relation between the *individual* and their embodiment of the *natural* and the *social*, in both enabling and constraining forms : without the natural and the social, individuality would be *empty*; without the struggle to develop, re-shape, or transcend them, it would be an *illusion*. What makes an individual, and thereby makes autonomy and individuality, is the way one actively responds to and shapes these influences, the creativity of the process, and the embodied natural and social both enable and constrain this.

### **There are levels of Levels of Agency and Autonomy.**

The broad agency/structure dichotomy is rejected as being too vague and misleading. The force of natural, social, and cultural circumstances is mediated by how people interact with them. But social structures and culture also have to be actioned and reproduced and thereby generate forms of agency, but the latter may be passive, active, or creative according to circumstances. The problem with all such forms of action or agency is that they will all appear to be agential. So in place of a simple agency/structure dichotomy it seemed necessary to distinguish between *natural*



*agency, structural action, and structural agency*, each embodying differing degrees of relative autonomy, but all of which are distinct *ethical and personal autonomy*.

## **SELF-REALIZATION AND AUTHENTICITY ARE PART OF ETHICAL AUTONOMY AND A BASIS FOR JUSTICE AND MORALITY.**

Self-realization and authenticity seem generally to be regarded with suspicion by social and political theorists, including liberals. One reason for this is that they tend to be regarded as being the affirmation and actualisation of a *pre-given* self, and that this thereby offends autonomy. But a second, and more common, reason is that they are viewed as entailing a sort of exaggerated '*self-interestedness*', preoccupied with one's own conception of the good to the exclusion of any concern for others or morality. Self-realization and authenticity on the one hand, and justice on the other, are regarded as pulling in opposite directions : the former call one to a life of self-discovery and self-fulfilment, whereas justice demands respect for the claims of others.

Both views are rejected by individuality : the first, because it reflects a simplistic naturalistic and actualisation view of self-realization; and the second because it is the outcome of viewing self-realization from within a liberal anti-perfectionist model founded on limited inviolability. For individuality, as we saw above, the pursuit of self-realization is one of the key components of the ethical autonomy that emerges out of the inviolability context and forms a foundation for comprehensive inviolability.

The argument regarding self-realization is that this is as much a matter of making or constituting oneself, the achievement of a self, an active and creative process that is interdependent with self-determination, than it is an actualisation of an already pre-given self. Self-realization as a mixed process of, discovery, development, and creation. Perfectionist / essentialist and self-actualization conceptions are rejected in favour of self-realization as a process of *praxis / self-activity*.

This sense of self-realization is linked to the overlapping notion of authenticity, culminating in a model of self-realizing authenticity. What is within humans to be discovered and developed is their capacity for self-making activity, and being

authentic is being true to this process within the constraints and enablements of the natural, social, and individual.

The focus of the discussion of authenticity is its relation to comprehensive inviolability – Shakespeare’s point : “to thine own self be true ..... Thou canst not then be false to any man”. The point being that authenticity is integral to ethical autonomy, this then contributing to moral autonomy. The notion of an authentic relation to one’s self, and to others, is developed through related concepts used by Buber, Rousseau, and Rogers. Buber’s ‘I–‘It’ relations are manipulative, rationalizing, and calculative, aimed at control or domination, and they would link to external goods and limited inviolability. In contrast, ‘I–‘Thou’ relations are characterised by open-ness, expression, mutuality and autonomy, and this is characteristic of ethical autonomy as a basis for moral autonomy, the interdependence of the self- and other-regarding. The former can be seen as inauthentic and the latter as authentic.

This distinction is then developed through Rousseau’s contrast between *amour de soi* and *amour propre* and Roger’s distinctions between *positive self-regard*, *conditional positive regard*, and *conditional positive self-regard*, which underlie the contrast made by Rogers and others between an *internal or external locus of evaluation or control*.

What all of these point to in their different ways are issues of empowerment and disempowerment, of autonomy or heteronomy, MacPherson’s ‘*developmental power*’ – the ways in which ‘*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*’ is enabled or constrained. The exercise of power can take Buber’s ‘I–‘Thou’ form and be nurturing and developmental in ways which foster self-realization and self-determination. Or it can take the ‘I–‘It’ form and be coercive and manipulative, rationalising and calculating, the overt or covert aim being control or domination. *Inviolability and authenticity* require the former rather than the latter, for the development of ethical and moral autonomy.

## **SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE CONCEPTIONS OF THE GOOD ARE INTERDEPENDENT.**

The claim here is that the subjective/objective distinction in relation to conceptions of the good, and the perfectionist/anti-perfectionist contrast, is too simplistic, not least because the two are inter-dependent. Subjective preferences may be adaptive, uninformed, manipulated or socially conditioned – what people learn to want is shaped by expectations and the things that society provides. The subjective and objective are not easily separated : the objective is internalised and becomes the subjective, which in turn develops the objective, the point about structural conditioning and structural elaboration discussed in Chapter 4 – a case of structural agency as I referred to it. This relates, for example, to the distinction being happiness and well-being : one may be subjectively happy, without being informed or autonomous, etc; whereas well-being requires both – the attainment of an objective standard of flourishing. Thus any substantive theory of the good must combine the objective and subjective.

## **INDIVIDUALITY FAVOURS INTERNAL GOODS AND INDIVIDUALISM EXTERNAL GOODS.**

The notions of external and internal goods link to ‘having’ and ‘being’ as different conceptions of the good. ‘Internal goods’ relate directly to the features of individuality discussed in previous Chapters - comprehensive inviolability, self-determination, self-realization and authenticity. For individuality, the condition to aim at is a life *rich* in internal goods but with a *just* share of external goods. For individuality, *both* types of goods are potential sources of well-being and happiness and, thereby, can be bound up with an individual’s own identity and interests, but internal goods are primary. In contrast, liberal-individualism, by virtue of its relation to capitalism and market relations is associated with ‘external goods’ – material success, the valuing of wealth, power, prestige, and the instrumental and manipulative social relations associated with the market.

As discussed previously, one of the significant blind-spots of liberal-individualism is its bias to systems of economic *distribution* rather than *production*. But what people

*do*, and *how* they do it, and not simply what they *get*, is a relevant consideration to conceptions of the good : whether the means used to generate the resources to be distributed, the system of production and production relations, is conducive to a good life. But the external goods focus has pervaded all forms of liberalism : the agenda of reform liberalism or liberal-egalitarianism has focused on the fairer distribution of external goods, not on internal goods.

Throughout life we engage in a wide range of *practices* – activities, occupations and roles, relationships, standards, rules, leisure pursuits, etc - that have certain internal characteristics/internal goods : specialist knowledge, skill and technique, an ethos, ends, rules, and standards, that are characteristic of that particular activity. By engaging in the practice we become immersed in and committed to these in a non-instrumental way if we want to become a good practitioner : one achieves and develops them and ourselves by aiming at excellence in the practice. The activities are engaged in because we are committed to them; because they enable the creative use and development of ones personal powers, ones talents, abilities and skills; because they empower and enable self-determination ; or contribute to a valued standard or a wider good; and thereby, for any or all such reasons, for the pleasure and intrinsic satisfaction they generate. The object of satisfaction for internal goods is our own activities, the satisfaction involved in doing well at our endeavours, the enjoyment of being and doing what we set out to be and do. They also receive the external rewards of income and recognition according to their due. But what they strive for is excellence in the practice in which they are engaged, and competition between practitioners towards this end benefits both the common good and the practice itself.

At the same time, a practice will also have certain *external goods* associated with it – money, power, prestige, fame, honour, influence, etc – forms of rewards, recognition, and benefits conferred on us by others or by institutions. These are external to the practice because they have no necessary connection to that activity itself – they could be acquired from any activity, so if these are what motivate us then our commitment to the practice is an *instrumental* one. External goods are inseparably connected to

institutions and the object of satisfaction is the high regard that the institutional hierarchy has for us. So the consequence will be that the quality of the practice will decline because commitment to it is instrumental ; and there will be a competitive struggle for power, position, and wealth, a manipulative stance towards others, and the common good will be lost sight of.

The thesis argues that there is a direct connection between internal goods and the *praxis* or *self-activity* that underlie self-determination, self-realization, and authenticity. Engagement in a practice can probably only generate internal goods if ones commitment to it is in some way self-motivated, enables self-development and expression, so that the individual is in some way self-determined and self-realized by engaging in the practice. For it not to be so, and this is the crucial point, would mean that commitment to the practice emerges from submission to authority, or is manipulated, or is in some similar fashion instrumental, so that *external goods* become the primary incentive and motivation for engaging in the practice. Someone can be *compelled* to observe a practice, rule, or standard, but this would convert it into an external good. Without an internalised and self-determined desire to commit and excel there are no incentives for anyone to respect the standards or obey the rules.

This then has implications for ethical and moral autonomy, the relationship between the self- and other-regarding, and for the liberal notion of the Right.

### **MORALITY AS AN INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL GOOD.**

in a liberal world, concern for others is optional and minimalist, so its importance is necessarily stressed because of its fragile presence. The problem of liberal moral philosophy and morality is that it is an '*other-regarding*' one, concerned with the development of rules regulating the relationship between the self and the other, but not with the relationship of the self to himself. It therefore lacks any substantive foundation. In a world characterised by the pursuit of self-interest via external goods morality and self-interest are inevitably at odds. One wonders where other-regarding concern is supposed to emanate from. But liberal morality offers no solutions to this problem because it has focussed on its consequences rather than its sources. Its



sources are *naturalised*, the inviolable human pursuit of individual self-interest. As such, a dichotomy is created between self-interest and morality, and the latter is then confined and reduced to a narrow range of human behaviour relating to aspects of our relations with others, and the avoidance of whatever is currently culturally designated as causing harm to them. There is a separation of the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding', and a contradiction between the approved pursuit of self-interest in the former, and its supposed renunciation in the latter.

The problem of morality within liberal-individualism is that it is an *external good* rather than an *internal good* – it is instrumental and/or imposed, external to the individual's *culturally endorsed* pursuit of his own self-interest in the private sphere, his own conception of the good, and thereby always fragile and at risk of being minimalist, requiring to be State-led and reinforced via a conception of the Right. The self-regarding and the other-regarding are at odds, and the 'sphere' of the 'self-regarding' is neglected.

The Chapter contrasts this liberal other-regarding '*rules morality*' with an '*ethics of character*' : in the latter, morality is an internal good, founded on comprehensive inviolability and ethical autonomy. The key themes are the interdependence of the self- and other-regarding, and the notion of morality as an internal good. The starting point for such a conception of the moral self is the recognition that the range of the ethical should include any concerns that might arise in response to the question of how one should live. Following from this is the acknowledgement that the 'ethical' and the 'moral' are interdependent and symbiotic. The first underlying principle of the moral self is 'ethical autonomy', and integral to the latter is MacPherson's '*developmental power*', '*the ability to use and develop ones capacities*'. As discussed in Chapter 2, to be human is to innately possess *potential worth*, and to have an *interest* in, and bear the moral *responsibility* for, creating, developing, and realizing this worth, via 'self-determination' and 'self-realization'. The 'rights' of individuals follow from this responsibility towards self and others. Such a 'moral self' entails Buber's '*I*'-'*Thou*' relations, Rousseau's '*amour de soi*', and Rogers' *positive regard*

*and self-regard*, and authenticity, being true to self because being so is valuable in its own right, and enables us to be true to others.

### **COMMUNALISM FOSTERS INDIVIDUALITY.**

Conceptions of comprehensive inviolability, self-determination, self-realization and authenticity, internal goods, and the moral self all imply, and require, some complementary substantive conception of community. The fundamental issue invariably raised by critics would be the probability of tension or contradiction between the principles of individuality and community. This arises because of what is normally assumed to be the 'self-interestedness' of individuality compared to the assumed 'harmony' or 'oneness' of interests entailed in community. We have dealt with the 'self-interestedness' argument in relation to other features of individuality – essentially it arises from confusing individuality with individualism. The second point, equating community with a *harmony* of interests, is argued to be a misconception : communalism is founded on a structural and moral base of comprehensive inviolability, which then fosters individuality.

Liberal-individualism is tied to a weak conception of community, and there is no substantive difference between its community and society. Individualism in its collective form is characterised as an association, an aggregate – Buber's 'I'-'It' relations ; or in terms of 'collectivism' when characterised by State intervention, or 'communitarianism' when adherence to shared social values is emphasised.

Conceptions of 'community' emphasise the subjective and psychological aspects of shared identity, *but often in the absence of any substantive structural or moral foundation for community*. Paradoxically, the perennial concern of 'community' is 'unity' and an other-regarding morality, precisely because it lacks a foundation for it.

In contrast, communalism has a foundation for unity that enables and fosters diversity and individuality. Communalism begins with the structural and moral : the absence of systematic exploitation or injustice, and a non-instrumental mutual concern and reciprocity, both of which are normally lacking in 'ordinary'

conceptions of community. Both these latter points reflect the context of comprehensive inviolability - ethical and moral autonomy and their interdependence – and community that is practised and committed to as an ‘internal good’.

The contrasts between individuality and individualism are then further explored through Tonnies’ distinctions between *Gemeinschaft* and *Wesenwille* on the one hand and *Gesellschaft* and *Kurwille* on the other.

## **Conclusion.**

This thesis has sought to retrieve or clarify a discourse of individuality and to show how it differs from a discourse of individualism. Individuality seeks to be a vindication of the *Prometheus* myth referred to above and in Chapter 2. From a normative standpoint its retrieval is important because it gives us different ways of seeing and understanding that have practical implications. The normative implication of the thesis is that individuality is not simply different to liberal-individualism but superior, as it is also to those forms of collectivism or communitarianism which arise in reaction to individualism but which remain its collective partners. Individuality and communalism are deemed *better* because they seek to deliver the good things that liberal-individualism promises but fails to deliver, or delivers only in limited forms. Individuality could more probably deliver these because the means to doing so are built in to it, they are its priorities, its key features, whereas in individualism they are absent or exist only formally, but often only weakly in substance.

One of the many perceived disappointments of individualism is that it does not promote *individuality*, though it might manifest as *pseudo-individuality*. This view is summarised in the quote at the start of Chapter 1 –

‘When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other’.  
(Eric Hoffer).

If this is the case, then its origin might be something natural and existential, as in one interpretation of Erich Fromm’s ‘*fear of freedom*’ and ‘*escape into conformity*’ as a

way of dealing with ontological insecurity and existential angst, etc. Or it might be socially constructed, an outcome of market relations and an ethos of external goods, as Beiner comments –

“The official ideology of liberal society...is diversity ... the rich multiplicity of different conceptions of the good...But when one actually surveys the liberal reality, what one sees is more and more sameness – of tastes, of clichéd perceptions of the world ....it is all too common for a rhetoric of robust individualism to obscure a reality of dreary conformism. Such is liberalism, with its shopping mall culture – where one has hundreds of shops to choose from, all of which sell the same junk” (Beiner 1992, p23)

Perhaps ontological insecurity, existential angst, and liberal-capitalism work together in generating Hoffer’s scenario. Billington wants to give ultimate responsibility to individuals –

“you can, by changing the externals, take people out of the cesspit; but the process by which the cesspit may be taken out of them is one which must emanate from within people themselves”. (Billington : 1990, p 253).

But it seems more likely that the two go together : taking people out of the ‘cesspit’ facilitates the removal of the cesspit from within people; but ultimately it is individuals that do both. No social structure or discourse is without evolving flaws and contradictions, seeds of their own destruction or transformation, and this then impacts upon individuals. But ultimately, we must be our own political arena, the personal is political, and we must be our own ‘creative self-makers’. We can make Prometheus happy.





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